

THE EXEMPLA IN HANDLYNG SYNNE

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## PREFACE

To the student of Middle English literature, Robert Mannyng of Brunne's Handlyng Synne provides many hours of enjoyable reading. I chose to study the exempla in Handlyng Synne, because I perceived, during the first reading of the poem, how earnestly Robert Mannyng tried to show his early fourteenth-century parishioners, through his handbook replete with Bible stories and supernatural tales, how to "handle" sin in its various forms.

Research on Handlyng Synne has thus far not been extensive, but a few monographs have familiarized me with the author and the period of his poem, particularly Sullens' dissertation on the Bodley MS. 415 and Crosby's biography of Robert Mannyng. The main source of understanding the author and his time, though, has to remain the collection of exempla in the manuscript itself.

I wish to thank Dr. Charles E. Walton and Dr. James F. Hoy for their assistance in the reading of the thesis.

Robert E. Mullin

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## Chapter I

### THE MEDIEVAL CONCEPT OF HANDBOOKS

Robert Mannyng proved that a good example directed at the individual provides the best sermon. When Mannyng wrote Handlyng Synne in 1303, he produced an outstanding handbook on personal penance.<sup>1</sup> Writings of this type had been evolving since the seventh century in an effort to reach an individual's soul with the most meaningful approach to penance.<sup>2</sup> By examining the development of the penitential, its intended reader or audience, and its use of exempla, one can appreciate the extent of Mannyng's accomplishment in Handlyng Synne.

The tradition to which Handlyng Synne belongs can be traced to the early Celtic church.<sup>3</sup> In the seventh century, secret confession had supplanted public confession, and confessors used guides or penitentials in the administration of specific penances according to the sin confessed.<sup>4</sup> Use

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<sup>1</sup>Frederick J. Furnivall, Robert of Brunne's "Handlyng Synne," l. 76.

<sup>2</sup>John Edwin Wells, A Manual of the Writings in Middle English 1050-1400, p. 169.

<sup>3</sup>D. W. Robertson, Jr., "The Cultural Tradition of Handlyng Synne," Speculum, XXII (April 1947), 169.

<sup>4</sup>Loc. cit.

of the penitentials was widespread. There were early Irish penitential documents such as the canons attributed to Saint Patrick, the Penitential of Finnian, the Penitential of Cummean, the Irish Canon, penitential writings of Adamnan, the old Irish Table of Commutations, and the Bigotian Penitential.<sup>5</sup> The Welsh had sixth-century synods of North Britain and of the Grove of Victory, a Book of David, and a work called Gildas.<sup>6</sup> The Anglo-Saxon church had, to date, penitentials ascribed to Bede and Egbert.<sup>7</sup> When Theodore of Tarsus came to England, he liked the Celtic method and adopted it. His decision is considered to have marked a turning point in the history of the Western Church.<sup>8</sup>

As the practice of private confession spread, so did the use of penitentials. The problem, however, was that these penitentials were neither official nor uniform in instruction.<sup>9</sup> By the ninth century, the penitentials were so contradictory that Frankish synods ordered orthodox collections of canons to replace existing penitentials, which were

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<sup>5</sup>John T. McNeill and Helena M. Gamer, Medieval Handbooks of Penance, pp. 75-85, 86-97, 98-116, 117-141, 142-147, 148-154.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 169-178.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., pp. 217-248.

<sup>8</sup>Robertson, op. cit., p. 169.

<sup>9</sup>Loc. cit.

to be burned.<sup>10</sup> Among the penitentials was a series of anonymous and pseudonymous Frankish and Visigothic works of the eighth and ninth centuries, including the Judgment of Clement, the Burgundian Penitential, the Bobbio Penitential, the Paris Penitential, the Fleury Penitential, the Tripartite St. Gall Penitential, the Penitential of Silos, the Penitential of Vigila of Alveda, and the St. Hubert Penitential.<sup>11</sup>

More penitentials were written, though, on into the eleventh century. The Corrector by Burchard of Worms was an influential work that marked a climax to the tradition.<sup>12</sup> In the twelfth century, Bartholomew of Exeter tried to keep the penitential alive, writing that every priest should have a "canon penitentialis," but new ideas in theology were making the genre obsolete.<sup>13</sup>

Some reform was needed, because there were more problems than the mere contradictions in the confessional manuals. Hermits, wandering preachers, and "foot-loose monks" abounded.<sup>14</sup> During this period of poverty, some priests kept

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<sup>10</sup>Robertson, p. 169.

<sup>11</sup>McNeill and Gamer, op. cit., pp. 271-294.

<sup>12</sup>Robertson, op. cit., p. 169.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 170.

<sup>14</sup>Friedrich Heer, The Medieval World, p. 202.

ale-houses to support their wives and children.<sup>15</sup> In an effort to rectify these situations, the Fourth Lateran Council in 1215-1216 made declarations that substantially changed regulations pertaining to confession. The Council required parishioners to make confession annually to their respective parish priests. Many of these parish priests needed better instruction in their duties, so new manuals were written, this time stressing the Deadly Sins and Penance.<sup>16</sup> Since Papal decrees granted wandering friars the privilege of hearing confession, priests and friars covered many miles to hear confessions. Friars, indeed, undertook the writing of general manuals and those "suited to their own needs."<sup>17</sup> These new manuals, based on the theoretical aspects of penance, held that penance was one of the seven sacraments. This concept grew out of a mistake on the part

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<sup>15</sup>Heer, p. 220.

<sup>16</sup>Homer G. Pfander, "Some Medieval Manuals of Religious Instruction and Observations on Chaucer's Parson's Tale," JEGP, XXXV (1936), 243.

<sup>17</sup>Loc. cit. Friars may have resorted to manuals because translations of the Bible were not available. Cf. Margaret Deansley, "Vernacular Books in England in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," MLR, XV (1920), 353. The article contains a quotation of a prohibition against lay Bible reading passed by the Council of Toulouse in 1229: "Lay people shall not have books of scripture except the psalter and the divine office, and even these books they shall not have in the vulgar tongue." Cf. Heer, p. 200: "The Roman Church's veto in the translation of the Gospels and other religious texts into the vernacular was a most effective means of keeping the people at arm's length."

of Peter Lombard in the twelfth century, who incorrectly attributed De vera et falsa poenitentia to Saint Augustine.<sup>18</sup> Interest in the legal aspects of penance also grew, primarily under the influence of Gratian, so that the legal element became "the province of the canonist."<sup>19</sup> These newer manuals were more systematized than the earlier ones, the sins now being considered as having come from seven principal vices. By this newer, flexible, abstract system, the confessor could estimate the relative magnitude of a given sin on the basis of the degree of consent involved. The newer system was more applicable to the variations of personal experience than the long, specific lists of sins and penances contained in the penitentials.<sup>20</sup>

The Decrees of the Lateran Council entailed a considerable degree of work and training in order to be implemented. For example, the priest was to be a "skilled physician to the sinful," one who would inquire into the circumstances of the sinner and the sin and "minister appropriate remedies."<sup>21</sup> Local councils recommended that, besides Easter, parishioners must confess at Pentecost and at Christmas; moreover, the new

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<sup>18</sup>Robertson, op. cit., p. 170.

<sup>19</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 171.

<sup>21</sup>Loc. cit.

literature of penance was abstract, fashioned after the De vera et falsa poenitentia and De poenitentia of William of Auvergne.<sup>22</sup>

Content of confessional manuals was influenced by the decrees of the Archbishop of Peckham in 1281.<sup>23</sup> The Archbishop, himself a friar, was aware of the needs of the friar and the parish priest. He decreed that the people be instructed four times a year in six basic teachings: the Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments, the Works of Mercy, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Seven Virtues, and the Sacraments. The sections of the manuals on Sacraments gave emphasis to Penance: Contrition, Confession, and Satisfaction.<sup>24</sup>

Confessional treatises grew in number, varying in length, purpose, treatment, and intended readers. They ranged from long, technical works in Latin to poetical renditions of the Six Points in simple English. Some were for reference; others were suitable in part for use as sermons to be read verbatim.<sup>25</sup> The writers varied their treatment, using, for example, allegory (as in Templum Domini), mysticism (as in Saint Edmund's Merure), and exempla (as in Manuel des Pechiez). The writers, consisting of prelates,

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<sup>22</sup>Robertson, p. 171.

<sup>23</sup>Pfander, op. cit., p. 244.

<sup>24</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>25</sup>Loc. cit.

parish priests, or regulars, composed their works as needed for use by learned priests, monks, canons, friars, nuns, or dedicated laymen.<sup>26</sup>

Latin manuals included Templum Domini, by Archbishop Grosseteste; Summa Theologica, possibly by Richard de Wethersett; Monoloquium, by John of Wales; Legiloquim, also by John of Wales; MS. Laud Misc. 2, written in part by John Stamford and Henry, Lector of the Oxford Franciscans; and MS. Bodl. 828, by William Babdy.<sup>27</sup> Templum Domini is a manual of instruction, treating of Virtues and Vices, the Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments (or Decalogue), and the Sacraments, especially Confession.<sup>28</sup> Similarly, Summa Theologica treats the Symbols of Faith (the Creed), the Lord's Prayer, the Articles, the Gifts of the Spirit, the Sacraments, the Ten Commandments, and the Virtues and Vices.<sup>29</sup> Monoloquium, written specifically for young preachers, treats the Virtues and Vices; Legiloquium treats the Ten Commandments.<sup>30</sup> The MS. Laud Misc. 2 contains notes,

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<sup>26</sup>Robert Mannyng himself was a canon. Cf. Ruth Crosby, "Robert Mannyng of Brunne: A New Biography," PMLA, LVII (1942), 27.

<sup>27</sup>Pfander, op. cit., pp. 245-246.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 245.

<sup>29</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>30</sup>Loc. cit.

sermon outlines and processes, and a manual which deals with the Articles of Faith, the Decalogue, the Sins, and the Sacraments.<sup>31</sup> The MS. Bodl. 828 is a fourteenth-century work which treats the Decalogue, the Vices, Confession, the Works of Mercy, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer.<sup>32</sup>

Latin manuals were generally written for the clergy; Anglo-French or English manuals were to be read to or by the laity.<sup>33</sup> Among the notable Anglo-French manuals are Le Merure (or Speculum Ecclesiae), by Saint Edmund Rich; Manuel des Pechiez, possibly by William of Wadington; MS. Bodl. 90; MS. Douce 282; and MS. Fr. f. 1 (Ser. 32,220 in the Bodleian). Le Merure, which was addressed to men of the profession of religion, contains a discussion of perfect living, prayer, and contemplation; moreover, it continues with Vices and Virtues, the Seven Gifts, the Ten Commandments, the Creed, the Sacraments, the Works of Mercy, and a concluding discussion of contemplation of the Passion, the Life of Meekness, and the Nature of God.<sup>34</sup> Manuel des Pechiez contains the Articles of Faith, the Decalogue, the Sins, the Sacraments, and Confession.<sup>35</sup> MS. Bodl. 90 is a prose manual

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<sup>31</sup>Pfander, p. 246.

<sup>32</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., p. 247.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 248.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 249.



containing the Deadly Sins and corresponding virtues.<sup>36</sup> MS. Douce 282 is a short confessional for nuns, containing confessional topics and a treatment of the Seven Sins and their remedies.<sup>37</sup> MS. Fr. f. 1 contains Confession, the Ten Commandments, and a portion on resisting temptation.<sup>38</sup>

Manuals written entirely in English flourished during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, after the time of the writing of Handlyng Synne. Handlyng Synne (1303) was one of several notable fourteenth-century manuals, among them being Speculum Gy de Warewyke (c. 1325) for lay reading, Dan Michel's Ayenbite of Inwyt (1340), Lay Folk's Catechism (1357), St. Edmund's Le Merure (c. 1240) in various English versions, and The Clensynq of Mannes Sowle (undated MS. Bodl. 923).<sup>39</sup> Handlyng Synne was one of the earlier works, written in verse; the fifteenth-century manuals were more often written in prose.<sup>40</sup>

When Mannyng wrote Handlyng Synne in 1303, he had a considerable amount of writing from which to draw. For example, Handlyng Synne shows a strong reflection of traditional penitential literature in the area of secret sin.

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<sup>36</sup>Pfander, p. 249.

<sup>37</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>38</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 250-251.

<sup>40</sup>Ibid., p. 252.

Mannyng was faced with the same problem as that of confessors in past centuries. He cautioned against mentioning secret sin (pryuyte), at the same time warning that secret sin must be confessed. The following lines, 30-36 and 137-140, indicate Mannyng's thoughts on this subject:

Of pryuytes speke y ry3t nou3t  
 þe pryuytes wyl y nat name  
 For none þarefore shulde be blame;  
 Leuer ys me þat þey be hydde,  
 þan for me were oponly kydde  
 Noþeles þey mote be shreuyne  
 3yf 3yfte of grace shal be 3euyne.

. . . . .

þarefore may hyt, & gode skyl why,  
 'Handlyng synne' be clepyd oponly;  
 For hyt toucheþ no priuite,  
 But opyn synne þat called may be.

The confessor who explained the seven principal vices to the penitent was confronted with what a modern psychologist would term "the power of suggestion." Should the confessor mention a sin of which the penitent was ignorant, the confessor might unwittingly tempt the penitent to commit a sin which he otherwise would not have committed; consequently, the confessor was cautioned to be careful while inquiring into sin. For example, the Spanish Visigoth, Bishop Theodulf of Orleans in the eighth century, issued the following warning in his Capitularies:

But he who makes confession shall bend his knees with the priest before God and then confess whatever he is able to recall from his youth--his behavior in all particulars. And if he cannot recall all of his misdeeds, or if perchance he

hesitates, the priest ought to ask him whatever is set down in the penitential--whether he has fallen into this offense or another. But, nevertheless, not all the offenses ought to be made known to him, since many faults are read in the penitential which it is not becoming for the man to know. Therefore the priest ought not to question him about them all, lest, perchance, when he has gone away from him, at the devil's persuasion, he fall into some one of those offenses which he previously did not know.<sup>41</sup>

Similar instructions appear in the Summula of Bishop Peter Quivil:

Item, moreover, in lechery and in other sins there are many evil devices and many unrightful ways (likewise among married people) which it is disgusting to mention or allude to; however, the penitent ought to confess them precisely, and the priest should hold himself strictly prepared in such things, so that if the penitent does not confess them fully, the priest may inquire about them. He should not, however, descend to particulars but stop at general terms (so that if the penitent is ignorant the priest should not ask him more concerning such things) either with regard to sins against nature or similar sins into which the penitent has fallen.<sup>42</sup>

The same basic admonition is given in many other works, e.g., the Constitutions of Richard Le Poore (c. 1220), the Constitutions of Saint Edmund (1236), Bishop Quivil's Synod of Exeter, De officiis ordinis of Hubert de Romans, continental decrees, and the introduction of Manuel des Pechiez.<sup>43</sup> These examples show that Mannyng's Handlyng Synne belongs

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<sup>41</sup>Quoted in Robertson, op. cit., p. 173.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid., p. 174.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., pp. 174-175.

in the category of the penitential, even though Handlyng Synne has been seriously called a treatise, a poem, a collection of sermons, and a collection of stories.<sup>44</sup> Handlyng Synne is all of these, just as are other works contemporary with Mannyng's time, but Handlyng Synne must be studied as a type of penitential literature if one is to understand Mannyng's purpose, that being to aid the confessor in helping the penitent to "handle" sin.

Handlyng Synne holds the distinction of being a landmark in penitential literature; it is a reflection of traditional penitential literature, but it is also a departure. Previous penitentials and even the Manuel des Pechiez, from which Handlyng Synne is adapted, proved to be dry reading. When Mannyng wrote the 12,630-line poem for the "lewed," he adopted an imaginative approach, using and reworking friar-sponsored materials, sermon books, historical works, poems, contemporary events, tales, and saints' lives. By writing as he did, Mannyng accomplished several objectives. He wrote mainly for those who understood only English, abandoning the "quante" (French) speech of an earlier age. He addressed his work to a group of secular persons typically found in an early fourteenth-century parish, using subject matter that had long been popular. He fulfilled a need for

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<sup>44</sup>Cf. Owst, Preaching in Medieval England, p. 277, and Wells, A Manual of the Writings of Middle English, p. 343.

an English version of confessional manuals for secular priests with inadequate training in Latin and for regular canons who served parish churches, as monastic orders experienced progressively more difficulty in recruiting capable young men.<sup>45</sup> The result of Mannyng's labors was an outstanding poem in the form of an English adaptation of material drawn from a tradition of Latin and French religious writings.

Mannyng constructed Handlyng Synne as a poem of eight-syllabled couplets containing a prologue, the Ten Commandments, the Seven Deadly Sins, the Sin of Sacrilege, the Seven Sacraments, the Twelve Points of Shrift, and the Twelve Graces of Shrift. To illustrate these virtues and vices, he used the contemporary practice of employing exempla, brief narratives containing human characters.<sup>46</sup>

The effectiveness of Mannyng's tales can be attributed to several tools that Mannyng used which will be exemplified in the examinations of the tales themselves. Mannyng used the vehicle of poetry; he expanded "legalistic" sounding statements found in the Manuel; he kept his poems relatively brief; he used second person pronouns in prefatory or concluding remarks directly spoken to the reader; he used humor,

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<sup>45</sup>Idelle Sullens, A Study of the Bodley MS. 415: Robert Mannyng of Brunne's Handlyng Synne, p. 22.

<sup>46</sup>Joseph A. Mosher, The Exemplan in the Early Religious and Didactic Literature of England, p. 6.

"fiends from hell," miracles, supernatural rewards and punishments, visions, and voices.<sup>47</sup>

Mannyng thought highly enough of exempla to incorporate over seventy tales and accounts that demonstrated the gravity of sin to his parishioners; moreover, when Mannyng wrote for the masses, he consequently wrote about the lives and times of his contemporaries. The reader of Handlyng Synne can readily see Mannyng's tendency to date and localize events in the narratives. The same flavor of contemporaneity appears in his homiletic passages, in which he generalizes about rich men, lords, or prelates, many times never mentioning that they lived perhaps centuries earlier.<sup>48</sup> For example, Mannyng's description of Saint John the Almoner, "bysshop and patryarke of Constantyne," reads as if Saint John lived in a neighboring county.<sup>49</sup> In using the story of a saint's life, a ghost story, or some humorous tale, Mannyng intended to illustrate the temptations and triumphs of the Christian life.

One more observation of a general nature should be made before examining the text itself. Mannyng's use of language in one respect does reflect the tradition of penitential

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<sup>47</sup>Cf. Heer, op. cit., p. 199. Heer refers to the people of this period as having a "mania for marvels."

<sup>48</sup>Sullens, op. cit., p. 56.

<sup>49</sup>Loc. cit.

literature, but as one reads other philosophies on sermons, he can discern a point of departure. For example, William of Auvergne wrote, "A simple sermon, unpolished, unadorned, moves and edifies the more."<sup>50</sup> William disliked the preacher "who, with ornate words, casts naked truth into the shadow."<sup>51</sup> Since Mannyng wrote for the "lewed," abandoning the "quante" speech, these two lines of reasoning are in agreement. Humbert de Romans wrote, "They who seek adornment are like those who care more for the beauty of the salver in which food is carried than for the food itself."<sup>52</sup> Mannyng's thinking is a reflection of this attitude because he wrote with a purpose. Alain de Lille warned against resorting to either extreme:

Preaching ought not to contain scurrilous or puerile words, or rhythmic melodies, or metric consonances. These contribute rather to soothing the ear than to instructing the mind. Such preaching is theatrical, and therefore should be unanimously condemned . . . . Yet though preaching should not shine with purple verbal trappings, neither should it be depressed by bloodless words. Rather a middle course should be pursued.<sup>53</sup>

Though Mannyng's writing is neither "bloodless" nor adorned "with purple verbal trappings," it is writing that arouses

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<sup>50</sup>Harry Caplan, "Some Medieval Tractates on Preaching," *Speculum*, II, iii (July 1927), p. 286.

<sup>51</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>52</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>53</sup>Loc. cit.

interest. The language cannot be called theatrical, although it is effective in relating humorous accounts and ghost stories. Mannyng demonstrated that he could use poetry and humor and still avoid the theatrical by subordinating the devices to the lesson being taught. Perhaps Mannyng can best be described as sincere and resourceful; his sincerity and resourcefulness are the foremost qualities that make Handlyng Synne unique in the field of penitential literature.



## Chapter II

### EXEMPLA IN THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

"The Ten Commandments" comprise the first section of Handlyng Synne. Mannyng's ten are slightly different from those which appear in the King James Version of 1611, as revealed in this following comparison:

#### Handlyng Synne

1. Thou shalt have no god but one.
2. Swear not His name in idleness.
3. Keep well the holy day.
4. Father and Mother we shall honor.
5. Thou shalt no man slay.
6. We shall no whoredom do.
7. No man's good shalt thou steal.
8. Thou shalt no false witness bear.
9. Covet not thy neighbor's thing.
10. Covet not thy neighbor's wife.<sup>54</sup>

#### The King James Version

1. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
2. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image.
3. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy.
5. Honor thy father and thy mother.
6. Thou shalt not kill.
7. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
8. Thou shalt not steal.
9. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's

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<sup>54</sup>11. 148, 608, 802, 1058, 1308, 1602, 2048, 2637, 2904, and 2924.

house, wife, manservant, maidservant,  
ox, ass, or anything that is thy  
neighbor's.<sup>55</sup>

In the Commandments and throughout the other divisions of Handlyng Synne, Mannyng uses tales and Bible stories that contain several devices to capture interest, provoke humor, or stimulate soul searching. Mannyng's procedure is to introduce his topic, expound upon it for a few paragraphs, and illustrate his topic with exempla. The exempla contain humor, supernatural rewards and punishments, creatures ("fendes") from hell, supernatural deaths, fatal or nearly fatal illnesses, visions, voices, miracles, and for authenticity, dates and/or localities of the occurrences.

THE FIRST COMMANDMENT, "THOU SHALT HAVE NO  
GOD BUT ONE"

The Tale of the Tempted  
Monk

The first tale is that of a tempted monk who journeys to Egypt and finds a heathen girl whom he wants to marry.<sup>56</sup> Willing to pay any price to have the girl, the monk forsakes his God, his baptism, and the goodness of his monkhood. Upon the renouncement of his faith, a dove symbolizing the presence of the Holy Spirit flies out of his mouth. Guilt stricken, he repents within a few days, and the dove returns into his

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<sup>55</sup>Exodus 20: 3-17.

<sup>56</sup>ll. 171-336.

mouth. The thankful monk praises God for His love and grace.

Joseph and Daniel

The second exemplum is merely an admonition to refrain from believing in dreams. Mannyng alludes to Joseph the son of Jacob, Joseph the earthly father of Jesus, and Daniel, warning that, with the exceptions of a few God-inspired dreams, dreams are not to be believed. Other dreams are either simply meaningless dreams or products of witchcraft.<sup>57</sup>

The Tale of the Witch and  
the Cow-Sucking Bag

The third exemplum is concerned with a bishop's lack of faith.<sup>58</sup> Mannyng uses a humorous situation of a witch who milks her cow with a cow-sucking leather bag that becomes activated by a charm. A passing bishop watches the witch as she works the charm on the bag, and he wishes to try the charm himself. The witch grants him permission, and he chants the required words. Nothing happens; the bag lies still, and the bishop is bewildered. "'Why,' seyð he, 'will hyt nat ryse . . . ?'" The witch replies, "'ge beleue nat as y do.'"<sup>59</sup> Mannyng echoes the witch's reply in his concluding remark, "þe bysshop seyð þe wurdys echoun,/But,

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<sup>57</sup>ll. 337-478. Cf. Frederic E. Faverty, "Joseph in Old and Middle English," PMLA, XLIII (1928), 102-103.

<sup>58</sup>ll. 501-562.

<sup>59</sup>ll. 539, 544.

beleue þeryn hadde he noun;" then, Mannyng directs the moral of the tale to his audience, cautioning that "Nomore shall hyt auayle þe/pat beleust not þere beleue shulde be."<sup>60</sup>

One may ask why witchcraft, superstition, and dreams are topics related to the First Commandment. The answer is that these three topics were part of traditional theology, and Mannyng was almost downright obligated to write on these subjects.<sup>61</sup> Saint Augustine, William Peraldus, and Saint Bonaventura, for example, discussed witchcraft, superstition, and dreams. Mannyng could not very well have omitted topics that had been so long associated with the First Commandment.<sup>62</sup>

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT, "SWEAR NOT HIS  
NAME IN IDLENESS"

The Tale of the Bloody  
Child

Mannyng uses the tale of the Bloody Child to follow his denunciation of false swearing, disbelief in the Godhead of Christ, and the swearing of oaths. He observes that since rich men have the common bad habits of swearing and lying, this is particularly designed for the rich.<sup>63</sup> One night, as

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<sup>60</sup>ll. 559-560; 561-562.

<sup>61</sup>D. W. Robertson, "Certain Theological Conventions in Mannyng's Treatment of the Commandments," MLN, LXI (1946), 505-506.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 505.

<sup>63</sup>ll. 689-758.

a rich man is lying alone, he sees a woman holding a child whose whole body is beaten and bloody. The rich man asks the reason for the child's condition, so the mother (Mary) tells him that his oaths, "wykked and wyld," have caused the suffering of the baby (Jesus). The man immediately repents for his own swearing and even promises to admonish others to refrain from swearing.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT, "KEEP WELL THE  
HOLY DAY"

The Tale of the Vinestorms  
and of Saturday the  
Half-holy Day

Mannyng emphasizes that Saturday from noon until midnight is a holy day, as is all day Sunday. The tale indicates that the Saturday observance is particularly an English custom, and Mannyng uses this exemplum to show that the Saturday observance is to be taken seriously.<sup>64</sup> The first half of the tale begins with a priest of England who is bewildered at the tempest that annually destroys the vines during their time of flourishing. The priest reminds his parishioners in Venice of the English custom of tithing and keeping Saturday holy from noon to midnight. The people of the parish begin keeping Saturday holy, and after one year of tithing and keeping Saturday, no vinestorms come. Those

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<sup>64</sup>11. 877-984.

who have been obedient praise Mary; the disobedient folk see their vines destroyed by a tempest.

In the second half of the tale, a man decides to work all day on Saturday and hire workers for the whole day. Suddenly he is struck dead at noon, and only special prayers for him revive him. The man testifies that Mary strangled him to death for violating the custom; then, he repents for swearing by the Virgin and for failing to revere Saturday. By using this tale and elements of the supernatural, Mannyng localizes two occurrences and stresses the importance of tithing, refraining from swearing, and properly observing the holy days. According to the tale, the disobedient are personally punished by Mary.

#### THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT, "FATHER AND MOTHER WE SHALL HONOR"

Mannyng uses two exempla to illustrate the consequences of indulging and cursing one's children. He tells the first as an ordinary story; in the second tale, he introduces the first of the "fendes of helle."

#### The Fond Father

A father gives his son his house, land, and cattle, expecting to be cared for in his old age. The son not only accepts all these gifts but he also brings a wife home, begets a child, and begins to neglect his father. Only much later, when the father is very old, does the son realize

that he should have been caring for his father.<sup>65</sup>

### The Cursing Mother

In the holy land a mother has her daughter guard her clothes while she bathes.<sup>66</sup> The child does not come at the mother's first call, so the mother curses, "The devil come on thee, for you are not ready to me."<sup>67</sup> The devil appears, saying, "I am ready," and he flies into the little girl, turning her into wood.

The two exempla above express two points of view. Mannyng's first exemplum is directed to the offspring, pointing out that they have an obligation to care for their parents when the parents become old. The second exemplum, which uses the device of a devil's surprise appearance, is meant for the parents, admonishing them to honor their children. According to Mannyng, the Fourth Commandment is an admonition to both parents and offspring.

#### THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT, "THOU SHALT NO MAN SLAY"

Mannyng lists two forms of slaying, physical and spiritual. Physical slaying includes murder, imprisonment, and mutilation; spiritual slaughter includes false indicters,

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<sup>65</sup>11. 1121-1178.

<sup>66</sup>11. 1255-1284.

<sup>67</sup>11. 1269-1270.

false judges, backbiters, those who turn others from righteousness, as well as failure to feed the poor. Mannyng gives examples of the consequences of physical and spiritual slaughter in the tales of the knight who had a vision of the Judgment and the nun who spoke naughty words.<sup>68</sup>

### The Bridge of Dread

This tale, set in Rome, begins with arrows from heaven that are shooting men to death. A knight, wounded by one of the arrows, has a vision of heaven, hell, and some folk who are going to one place or the other. From a bridge of dread, the knight looks below and sees hell, noisy, dreadful, full of grizzly water, black, deep, and stinking.<sup>69</sup> Beyond the bridge he sees heaven, a fair country filled with mansions, green meadows, and folk who look like angels.<sup>70</sup> He sees a few persons who have earned their proper rewards. A priest of clean life passes over the bridge into heaven; Pers, a man of vengeance, falls into the foul black water; and Steven, a lecher being pulled down by fiends, is rescued by two fair men because he gave alms during his life on earth. The tale does not reveal the fate of the wounded knight.

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<sup>68</sup>ll. 1369-1486 and 1547-1600 respectively.

<sup>69</sup>ll. 1386-1388.

<sup>70</sup>ll. 1391-1416.



The Quarrelsome Nun Who  
Spoke Naughty Words

Mannyng uses this tale to affirm that spiritual is as bad as physical slaughter. The nun in this tale does good deeds but speaks words which entice her acquaintances to sin. After she dies, fiends exhume her body and with burning swords cut her tongue in two. By morning, half her body is burned away. The burned half represents half a life wasted.

THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT, "WE SHALL NO  
WHOREDOM DO"

Mannyng's exposition of the Sixth Commandment is on three main topics: fornication among the unmarried, adultery among the married, and the bliss of good married women.

Joseph and Mary

For the topic of fornication among the unmarried, Mannyng uses the Biblical example of Joseph and Mary, who abstained from sexual relationship until after they were married.<sup>71</sup> Mannyng's reference to Joseph and Mary does not constitute a tale, but it does serve as a standard of morality.

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<sup>71</sup>11. 1657-1662. According to Eastern custom, Joseph and Mary did not consummate their marriage for one year, during which period Christ was born. Cf. K. C. Pillai, Light through an Eastern Window, pp. 20-21.

### The Adulterous Wife

This exemplum is directed to women, although men reading or listening to the tale might interpret it to mean that they can be punished similarly for committing adultery.<sup>72</sup> The story transpires on an island beyond the sea, where there lives a dragon that terrorizes the people. An itinerant hermit seeking the dragon consents to be shriven by a good man so that he can be granted a confrontation with the monster, reputed to be a fiend of hell. An angel guides the shriven hermit and a crowd of townspeople to the dragon's lair, which is discovered to be a tomb of stone.<sup>73</sup> Upon opening the grave, the crowd sees the dragon lying between two halves of a woman's skeleton, the halves symbolizing her infidelity.<sup>74</sup> The people discover that the woman has been condemned to spend eternity in pain with the fiend (dragon) because she committed adultery.<sup>75</sup>

### Saint Macaire

Experiencing the joy of heaven is not confined to only the men of good life; good women may also experience heavenly

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<sup>72</sup>11. 1741-1868.

<sup>73</sup>1. 1810.

<sup>74</sup>1. 1821.

<sup>75</sup>11. 1865-1868.

bliss. The importance of being a good wife is illustrated by this tale of Saint Macaire and the two good married women.<sup>76</sup> Saint Macaire is an abbot who prays that he might know his peers in heaven.<sup>77</sup> God answers by telling him to go into a city wherein dwell two good women. Saint Macaire does as he is told and finds the two good women. He interrogates them, thinking that these two women have certainly done something very special in God's sight.<sup>78</sup> He is surprised to learn that the "something special" is their being good and faithful wives.<sup>79</sup> The wives, who married brothers, do not think of themselves as special, so they are surprised to hear Saint Macaire tell them that he was sent to them. Mannyng uses only the device of a voice from God in this tale, but he did show that obedient wives will rank as highly as good abbots when rewards are given in heaven.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT, "NO MAN'S GOOD  
SHALT THOU STEAL"

Mannyng uses four exempla to illustrate the evils of theft: the tale of Zenon, the would-be thief; the tale of a knight who robbed a poor man; the tale of Saint Forsyne's

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<sup>76</sup>11. 1917-2008.

<sup>77</sup>11. 1921-1924.

<sup>78</sup>11. 1946-1948.

<sup>79</sup>11. 1954-1960.

visit to hell and his punishment there; and a comment on usurers.<sup>80</sup>

### Zenon

Zenon, the main and only character in the tale, is a monk who is in good standing with God. On his way to Palestine Abbey, he is tempted to steal a gourd to eat. Knowing that stealing is wrong and that it is punishable by hanging, Zenon decides to hang himself by his hands to determine whether suffering justifies the stealing. After suffering through five days of heat, he decides that the suffering is too great, so he lets himself down and does not steal the gourd. This tale is one of the few which contain no supernatural manifestations; perhaps Mannyng's point is that decisions can be made without the influence of some supernatural occurrence.

The next exposition concerns punishment for ravishing wives, rich girls, and poor girls, but Mannyng does not illustrate this type of stealing. He proceeds to illustrate the succeeding topic; i.e., lords who rob their tenants, with the exemplum of the knight who robbed a poor man.<sup>81</sup>

### The Ghost's Cloak

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<sup>80</sup>11. 2095-2142, 2223-2360, 2473-2594, and 2595-2630 respectively.

<sup>81</sup>11. 2223-2360.

The main character in this tale is a dead knight who comes by night to his living friend to ask that a mass be sung for him. The dead knight confesses that he robbed a poor man of his cloak during their lifetimes, and as punishment in the afterlife, the cloak, now as heavy as a mountain and hotter than any fire on earth, was cast upon him. The dead knight asks that a sacrament of the altar be performed by a good man to free his soul, so the living knight obliges. As the living knight's reward, the dead knight promises his living friend a happy death two years later in the holy land. In this tale a touch of irony emerges; the cloak which was so easy for the knight to steal becomes the object that is crushing him. Again, the importance of sacraments performed by "good men" is stressed.

### Saint Forsyne

The tale of Saint Forsyne is directed to usurers. Saint Forsyne falls into "an euyl strong," and when he prepares "to deye," an angel comes to take him on a visit to hell. The angel has Forsyne submit to two tests of fire to determine his purity, the second of which he fails. In great pain he confesses to a sin of usury, and after his confiscated soul has suffered enough, the angel brings the soul back to his body and shows him the bliss of heaven. The burns on Forsyne's body stay with him throughout the rest of his life. Four years before he dies, he establishes

a church and ordains a minister.

The fourth and last exemplum of this Commandment is not in the form of a tale as such; it is a type of caution to usurers in general, having no central character. This exemplum states that a usurer at one time was held to be viler than a Jew and that dead usurers were banned from being buried in the churchyard and were deprived of eternal rest.<sup>82</sup> The last exemplum differs from the three tales in that it only hints of punishment; in the three tales, the theme of punishment is very strong.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT, "THOU SHALT  
NO FALSE WITNESS BEAR"

False witness, according to Mannyng, assumes three forms: swearing a false oath, swearing a wicked oath, and swearing a foolish oath. Of the three, the first type is exemplified in the tale of the rich forswearer at a trial in London.<sup>83</sup> This tale, one of the shortest in Handlyng Synne, has been localized by Mannyng, the trial being set in London, involving an argument between a rich man and a poor man over the ownership of a plot of land. As the rich man is being given the oath, he knows that he is going to present false testimony; consequently, God strikes him dead as soon as he

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<sup>82</sup>11. 2595-2630.

<sup>83</sup>11. 2699-2722.

finishes the oath.

### John the Baptist

The second type of false witness, the wicked oath, is exemplified by the Biblical account of the death of John the Baptist.<sup>84</sup> One day King Herod promised to grant any wish to his daughter, so the daughter (under duress from her mother) asked for the head of John the Baptist. The oath was wicked because Herod obligated himself to fulfill any wish, even a cruel one. Mannyng follows the account with his own observation that Herod would not have kept his vow had his daughter asked for Herod's eye.

### Jephthah

The third type of false witness, the foolish vow, is exemplified in another Bible story, the account of Jephthah and his daughter.<sup>85</sup> Jephthah went into battle, asking God's blessing and promising to sacrifice the first living thing he saw upon arrival home. God gave Jephthah victory, so Jephthah went happily home, intent on keeping his vow. The first to meet him was his daughter, so after two months, he slew her for sacrifice. Mannyng also follows this account with his own thought that it is better to break one's vow and serve penance for a broken vow than to make a vow which

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<sup>84</sup>11. 2817-2844.

<sup>85</sup>11. 2845-2902.

could result in someone's death.

The exempla in the Eighth Commandment are the last in the section on the Ten Commandments, because Mannyng uses no exempla for his very short expositions on the Ninth and Tenth Commandments. Mannyng includes a few necessary admonitions only, e.g., to refrain from wanting or plotting to gain another man's goods or wife. He concludes his remarks on the Commandments by saying that the subject of envy will be discussed under the Seven Deadly Sins.



## Chapter III

### EXEMPLA IN THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

Mannyng labels the Seven Deadly Sins "þe dedly doughters of helle."<sup>86</sup> His list of the Seven Deadly Sins is virtually the same as the lists given in Mirour de l'Omme, Confessio Amantis, Ayenbite of Inwyt, Jacob's Well, and Chaucer's Parson's Tale; that is, the categories of the Seven Deadly Sins in these works are the same, although among these works there is much overlapping of specific sins when they are categorized.<sup>87</sup> Specifically, the Seven Deadly Sins are pride, anger, envy, sloth, covetousness, gluttony, and lechery; and Mannyng expounded on these in detail.<sup>88</sup>

#### ONE: PRIDE

Of all the Seven Deadly Sins, pride is called the

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<sup>86</sup>1. 2990.

<sup>87</sup>Two points of view exist on the rigidity of the categorizing of the Seven Deadly Sins. Cf. Frederick Tupper, "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," PMLA, XXIX (1914), 111-130, and John Livingston Lowes, "Chaucer and the Seven Deadly Sins," PMLA, XXX (1915), 242-285.

<sup>88</sup>Pride, ll. 2989-3702; anger, 3703-3914; envy, 3915-4236; sloth, 4237-5324; covetousness, 5325-6514; gluttony, 6515-7336; lechery, 7337-8582.

"eldest daughter."<sup>89</sup> As one can determine by consulting the appendix or noticing the number of lines devoted to pride, Mannyng pursued pride in depth, using four exempla: the tale of the hypocritical monk from the Abbey Tangabaton, the tale of the proud lady who was burned to ashes again and again in hell by a burning wheel, the tale of the knight and monk who loved new fashions, and the tale of the back-biting English monk who had to gnaw his burning tongue in hell.<sup>90</sup>

### The Hypocritical Monk

The lesson from this tale of Saint Gregory's Dialogues is that hypocrisy is a form of pride, "Feyre wipoute, and foul wipynne."<sup>91</sup> This tale is localized and uses the device of a fiend from hell. In an Iconium monastery known as Tangabaton Abbey, a monk calls everyone into his room to hear him make a deathbed confession. With sorrow his listeners hear him confess to hypocrisy. He has falsely worshiped and eaten "ful lustyly" while he should have been fasting.<sup>92</sup> With his last breath, he says that the "fende of helle" was coming after him to "strangle and cheke,/Ne shal

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<sup>89</sup>1. 2991.

<sup>90</sup>11. 3153-3198, 3241-3310, 3353-3396, and 3553-3618 respectively.

<sup>91</sup>1. 3196.

<sup>92</sup>1. 3182.

y neuer aftyr speke."<sup>93</sup> There, he dies in front of those gathered.

### The Proud Lady

The second tale is about pride in adornment. A lord's wife, who loved to dress well and wished to be the "feyryst lady" of all, dies when she most wants to live. Her squire, who becomes very ill soon after her death, has a vision of her one night. She takes the squire against his will to hell to see her punishment. A wheel is set on her head, and the squire watches as she burns to ashes, rises, burns to ashes again, rises again, and again burns to ashes. She says that the wheel will burn her to ashes forever, because in her life she committed the sin of pride in adornment; then, she adds a warning that the squire and her lord should change their ways, because they will die soon. A while later, they die as predicted, although the reader is not told of their fates.

### The Knight and Monk Who Loved New Fashions

The lesson in this tale is against pride in dress. A fashion-minded knight who had made a very nice coat for himself is killed during a fight with robbers, and his friends have him buried at the church. His friends divide

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<sup>93</sup>11. 3184, 3189-3190.

his cattle among the poor. The only object that the poor refuse to take is the coat, but a clerk who sees it prays for and receives the "kote of pryde."<sup>94</sup> Elated, the monk dons the coat, but as soon as he does, a fire alights on him and burns "hys body dounne to þe grounde."<sup>95</sup> Pride in dress brings its own punishment.

The Backbiting English Monk

This last tale on pride is about an English monk who is a constant backbiter. God allows a sickness to befall the monk, and he dies. Some time later, during midnight matins, one monk has a vision of his lately-departed acquaintance. The dead monk, now condemned to hell to gnaw his burning tongue forever, tells his story to the monk who beholds this frightening vision. The live monk interprets this vision as a warning, and although he makes no comments after the vision, one may conjecture that the monk decides to watch his tongue more carefully.

TWO: YRE (ANGER)

Anger is the devil's second daughter.<sup>96</sup> Mannyng's exposition on anger is rather short, but it does distinguish

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94<sub>1</sub>. 3376.

95<sub>1</sub>. 3385.

96<sub>11</sub>. 3703-3914.

between evil anger and righteous wrath against sin. Righteous wrath does not possess the characteristics of wickedness, hate, and murder to the extent that evil anger does. One interesting observation is that swearing is mentioned under the category of anger; however, if one swears in "rybaudy" (ribaldry), that type of swearing is not deadly sin, since it is "yn game."<sup>97</sup> Mannyng used only one exemplum for the sin of anger, i.e., the tale of the merciful knight and how the crucifix kissed him.<sup>98</sup>

### The Merciful Knight

A young knight seeks revenge upon a knight who killed the young knight's father in a duel some time ago. The murderer knight flees and hides in a castle. One day, during Lent, he sees people going to church to ask for forgiveness, and he decides to venture out and also attend church. The young knight discovers the older knight and threatens his life, but instead of retaliating, the old knight gets down on his knees, begging for forgiveness in the name of Jesus, who died for all and forgave those who spilled His blood. The young knight grants mercy, and when they in turn kiss the crucifix, the crucifix kisses the young knight for his mercy.

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<sup>97</sup>11. 3768-3769; 3761-3766.

<sup>98</sup>11. 3797-3914.

THREE: ENVY

Since envy has few subdivisions, this section is also brief, with only one exemplum, the tale of Saint Florens' bear.<sup>99</sup> Envy includes those who are jealous, and those who are traitors, backbiters, and liars. The tale of Saint Florens' bear exemplifies envy at its extreme, the willingness to kill. This tale utilizes the device of a Divine judgment wrought by prayer.

Saint Florens' Bear

Saint Florens is a hermit who lives with another man of holy will named Eutycyus. When Eutycyus leaves Florens to serve as the new abbot of the nearby abbey, Florens becomes very lonely, so God provides a bear for company. Florens and the bear get along very well, and the bear faithfully cares for the six sheep that Florens owns. Four envious monks kill the bear, and Florens seeks consolation in Eutycyus, asking for God to work His will upon those responsible. Immediately, the four monks die and rot. The tale ends abruptly with the death of the monks.

FOUR: SLOTH

Mannyng's treatment of glōth is more extensive than

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<sup>99</sup>11. 3915-4236.

the expositions on anger and envy, this time including six exempla. Mannyng's idea of the slothful include the idle rich, the inattentive, the procrastinating, the sporting, the indulgent, and the despairing. Mannyng must have wanted particularly to stress the importance of sloth to his readers and listeners, because he devoted over one thousand lines of Handlyng Synne to sloth.<sup>100</sup>

### The Procrastinating English Squire

The first exemplum concerns the consequences of seeking riches and delaying repentance.<sup>101</sup> The tale is a localized one with the device of fiends from hell and angels from heaven. A squire named Lindeseye, who serves King Conred, has no equal throughout the land; he loves riches, and he sins without thought of repentance.<sup>102</sup> When the squire is taken ill, the king advises him to repent of his sins, but the squire refuses. The next time that the king visits his bedside, the knight tells him that he had two sets of visitors. The first were two fair young men who showed the squire a small book containing his good deeds. The second visit was from two black, stinking men who showed him a big thick book of records of his evil deeds, not one of which

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<sup>100</sup>ll. 4237-5324.

<sup>101</sup>ll. 4365-4510.

<sup>102</sup>ll. 4383-4384.

was forgiven. The squire continues that the men then impaled him on two burning knives and said that they would soon take him to hell; then, he realizes that his time has come. He dies in the king's presence and goes immediately to hell.

### The Minstrel

Mannyng's next tale follows exposition on the evil of dances, carols, summer games, and minstrels.<sup>103</sup> This exemplum uses the device of a supernaturally-timed death. A minstrel comes to a bishop's house to ask charity. As the food is served, the minstrel makes "hys melody/wip grete noyse, and loude, and hye" instead of offering prayer for the food.<sup>104</sup> The bishop, who can not concentrate to pray, is shown by the Holy Spirit that God will take vengeance on this outrage. The minstrel eats his meal and leaves, but as he passes through a gate, a stone from a wall dislodges and kills him.

### Robert Grostest

Mannyng offers this tale to show that music does have its proper place in church.<sup>105</sup> Saint Robert Grostest of Lincoln keeps a harp in a special chamber to play frequently. When asked why he keeps a harp, Saint Robert answers that

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<sup>103</sup>11. 4701-4738.

<sup>104</sup>11. 4707-4708.

<sup>105</sup>11. 4739-4774.



the "vertu of þe harp" destroys the fiend's might and gives comfort and joy; besides, he continues, David in the Psalms said that one should worship God with many musical instruments. This tale is not a story with a plot; it is, instead, a testimony for the God-intended purposes of musical instruments. Mannyng shows that playing an instrument is not slothful if one praises God with it.

### The Indulgent Father

Mannyng's third exemplum shifts the topic to that of indulgent parents.<sup>106</sup> In this short tale, a father does not chastise his son, even when the child curses God. As in some of the previous exempla, sickness enters the scene. The child, only five years old, becomes deathly ill. Sitting on his father's knee, the child says that he sees two black men that intend to take him to hell; then, he tries to hide in his "fadyrs bosum," but a fiend carries "þe saule into helle."<sup>107</sup> The child curses God once; then, he dies, going "to helle wip shame."<sup>108</sup>

### Syre Ely

This Bible story has the same theme of a father's inability to control his offspring. The two sons of Syre

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<sup>106</sup>11. 4863-4902.

<sup>107</sup>11. 4889, 4891.

<sup>108</sup>1. 4894.

Ely grew up to be cruel and disobedient; when Ely scolded them, they became worse.<sup>109</sup> After they were fully grown, they were chosen by the folk of Israel to carry the ark of the covenant into battle against the Philistines. The Philistines slaughtered the sons and ravished God's ark, and word of the tragedy soon reached Ely, who fell backward off his chair and broke his neck and skull. Ely, his sons, and Israel all paid dearly for the sloth of Ely.

### The Vision of Carpus

The last exemplum on sloth follows an exposition on idleness, despair, and mercy.<sup>110</sup> In this tale, from "Seynt Dyonys of Fraunce," a priest named Carpus wins the soul of a Saracen, only to see the Saracen reconverted by another Saracen. Carpus, deeply sorry about the man's apostasy, prays that God will seek vengeance on the apostate man. At night, Carpus has a vision of a man struggling to keep from being pulled into the deep pit of hell, and Carpus prays that the man might fall in for having turned away from God. At this moment, Christ appears to Carpus, showing him His "wundys alle bloody" and saying that Carpus should be more merciful, because He gave Himself for the Saracen's ransom.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>109</sup>11. 4927-5044.

<sup>110</sup>11. 5237-5324.

<sup>111</sup>11. 5283-5288.

Carpus, then, thanks God for the lesson of the vision; he has learned that he should pray for man's salvation, not for man's condemnation.

With the tale of Carpus, Mannyng adds a second lesson to the lesson of certain judgment for slothfulness: It is God's prerogative to judge, not man's; man should have mercy on his fellow men, just as Christ is merciful. The device of the vision is particularly effective as a visual and moral illustration.

#### FIVE: COVETOUSNESS

Examination of the fifth Deadly Sin reveals that Mannyng makes a distinction between covetousness and avarice. Other lists of the Seven Deadly Sins name the sin avarice; for example, the Parson's Tale, the Mirour de l'Omme, Confessio Amantis, the Ayenbite of Inwyt, and Jacob's Well label the sin avarice and include long lists of sins in this category.<sup>112</sup> Mannyng associates covetousness with thought and avarice with deed, and he discerns that covetousness wants something belonging to others while avarice wants no one to have the given object.<sup>113</sup> The scope of Mannyng's covetousness is fairly strictly defined to include plunder,

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<sup>112</sup>Lowes, op. cit., pp. 243-249. The Ayenbite, pp. 246-247, does not mention covetousness under avarice.

<sup>113</sup>ll. 5327-5340.

unmerciful stewards, simony, usury, fraud, robbery,  
miserliness, untrustworthy executors, and bad testators.<sup>114</sup>

Covetousness is also a long section, almost 1200 lines, including seven exempla: the tale of the unmerciful judge, the tale of Pers the usurer, the tale of Lucretius, the tale of the good hermit, the tale of the Cambridgeshire miser-parson, the tale of the three dishonest executors, and the tale of the two wicked Kesteven executors.<sup>115</sup>

### The Unmerciful Judge

The tale of the unmerciful judge is somewhat localized, occurring somewhere in a country beyond the sea. Mannyng's lesson is that a failure to show mercy is a type of covetousness. A certain judge has the reputation of being one who follows the letter of the law, showing no mercy to the poor. One day, the judge falls into a "sykenes hard," and men who know of him wish that death would take him. On his deathbed the judge cries, "Lorde, haue on me mercy!" Then, the Lord answers him from the sky, "þou haddest neuer of man pyte,/Ne y shal neuer haue noun of þe."<sup>116</sup> Immediately, the judge dies and goes where "he shulde go."<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>114</sup><sub>11</sub>. 5325-6514.

<sup>115</sup><sub>11</sub>. 5443-5480, 5573-5944, 6001-6042, 6111-6152, 6173-6228, 6305-6378, and 6379-6414 respectively.

<sup>116</sup><sub>11</sub>. 5474, 5477-5478.

<sup>117</sup><sub>1</sub>. 5480.

### Pers the Usurer

This tale, one of the longest in Handlyng Synne, follows exposition on simony and usury. Pers is a usurer who is merciless to the poor, but he changes his ways after a series of two visions from God, following an encounter in which Pers throws a loaf of bread at a beggar. The loaf, even though thrown, saves Pers from being eternally condemned; moreover, Pers is started on the road to salvation. He falls into a great sickness and is bedridden. Following two dream visions in which God reveals that He loves the poor, Pers gives away his all and has himself sold into servitude. Even when given the chance for freedom, Pers insists upon staying in his role as a servant. The name and meek character of Pers becomes well known, and those who knew him earlier are happily surprised. Pers leads such a good life after his conversion that God takes him as He did Enoch and Ely in the Old Testament. Pers is the example that usurers can be saved and lead exemplary lives.

### Lucretius

Lucretius is a rich and covetous man who would go to any extreme for personal gain. When Saint Beatrice does not will her land to him, he kills her and usurps it. During an evening feast, a poor woman nursing a child comes into the hall of Lucretius' ill-gotten dwelling. The baby condemns Lucretius for the foul murder and commands through God's

might that the devil leap into him. Immediately, the devil leaps into Lucretius and travails him with great pain for three days, after which time Lucretius dies and goes to hell while, as Mannyng concludes, the devil laughs.

### Good Hermit

This tale is different from the first two, because it shows that people who have money can lose peace of mind for fear of robbery. A thrifty hermit withdraws a goodly sum of money to keep at home, but the more he thinks about being robbed, the more he thinks it better to live by having less money and more peace of mind. When two men come to his gate, he decides to give them the money that he has been saving; furthermore, he pledges to himself to keep no money from this time on.

The tale of the good hermit is another of the few departures from the usual form of exempla in that it contains no supernatural occurrences of devices such as marvels, voices, or fiends. Mannyng lets one's conscience speak.

### Cambridgeshire Miser-Parson

A group of men investigate a Cambridgeshire parson and two of his counselors in regard to a chest which might be full of treasures. The men interrogate the parson about the coffer, but he says nothing; so the investigators pry the coffer open to discover gold, silver, and jewels of many

kinds. The parson has a silver dish of gold pieces brought to him; then, he frantically stuffs his mouth with the gold in an attempt to keep what he can, at least. Within a few seconds, though, the miser-parson swoons and dies.

### Three Dishonest Executors

A good man chooses three executors to handle his estate properly. After the man's death, the executors decide that the good man's estate will do him no good here, now that he is in either heaven or hell, so they divide the estate into three equal shares. They further decide that the man was good enough in his earthly life so that no masses need to be sung for him. Though the fates of the executors are not given, there is the caution to men to choose executors carefully, or to be their own.

### Kesteven Executors

In Kesteven a man chooses poor executors, two wicked men of the town, at a time during which his son is not in the country. After the man dies, the two wicked Kesteven executors decide to keep all of the man's estate. The son returns to the country to ask the executors to fulfill the testament of this father, but the executors refuse. The son prays to God to take vengeance on their deed, and one month later, one Kesteven executor is found mysteriously strangled; the other dies soon in poverty.

SIX: GLUTTONY

Mannyng's expositions and exhortations begin with topics of drunkenness and immoderation, but they drift into other topics not included in other lists of the Seven Deadly Sins, e.g., exhortations against chiding the poor, exhortations against eating with Jews or excommunicated folk, and exhortations to give alms freely.<sup>118</sup> In addition, Mannyng apparently thinks that anything pertaining to eating habits should be included in the category of gluttony; for example, refusal to share food or money that could buy food is in the category of gluttony. Mannyng illustrates these ideas with three exempla: the Bible story of the rich man and Lazarus, the tale of Saint John the Almoner, and the tale of the grudging Bishop Troilus.<sup>119</sup>

The Rich Man and Lazarus

The story of the rich man and Lazarus was told by Jesus to the Pharisees; Mannyng calls him Dives, but the Bible does not name the rich man.<sup>120</sup> The rich man dressed and ate sumptuously while Lazarus, a poor, diseased man, sat outside

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<sup>118</sup> ll. 6515-7336.

<sup>119</sup> ll. 6635-6720, 6837-6686, and 6917-7076 respectively.

<sup>120</sup> Luke 16: 19-31. During the Middle Ages, the name Dives was erroneously given to the rich man; Dives itself means rich. Cf. George A. Buttrick (ed.), Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, I, 856.



continually, wanting some small bit of food. The only attention that Lazarus received was that the rich man's dogs licked Lazarus' sores; the rich man himself never fed Lazarus, so Lazarus starved. After some time, Lazarus died and was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom.<sup>121</sup> Still later, the rich man died. In hell, the rich man looked across the gulf between heaven and hell and saw Lazarus in Abraham's bosom. In torment, the rich man begged Abraham to send Lazarus with a small amount of water to cool his burning tongue, but Abraham refused, saying that the gulf prevented him from crossing, even if he wanted to. The rich man, then, asked that Lazarus be sent to testify to his five brothers so that they would repent, but Abraham also refused that request, saying that if they would not hear Moses and the prophets, they would not hear Lazarus.

### Saint John the Almoner

Although the tale of Saint John the Almoner is similar in principle to the account of the rich man and Lazarus, it extends the idea of sharing by showing that a person should give alms freely, even if the beggar asks too much. The pilgrim in this tale decides to test Saint John, so he asks for six coins. Saint John commands his servant to give the

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<sup>121</sup>Abraham's bosom is an intermediate state of Paradise in which the righteous dead await resurrection. Cf. Henry H. Halley, Halley's Bible Handbook, p. 515.

man six coins. The pilgrim accepts the six coins, goes away, changes clothes, and returns to ask for six coins. Saint John recognizes the man, but he gives him six more coins, pretending not to recognize the pilgrim. The pilgrim accepts the second six coins, goes away, dons a third set of clothes, and returns to Saint John. The servant, recognizing him again, becomes angry to see a man ask so much, but Saint John obliges the man a third time, giving him twelve coins, because he perceives that this pilgrim is a test to determine John's generosity.

### Bishop Troilus

Bishop Troilus of Constantine is a subordinate to Saint John the almoner of the previous tale. Bishop Troilus goes with Saint John one day to see the folk coming from many countries. Saint John does not have enough money to give to everybody, but the bishop has thirty pounds. After a sermon from Saint John on the subject of alms-giving, Troilus gives his thirty pounds grudgingly. On the way home, Troilus falls into a sickness from the thought of having given away the entire thirty pounds. Later, Saint John comforts him so that his sickness passes. Then, as Troilus sleeps, Jesus gives him a vision of the heavenly palace waiting for him for having given alms. Troilus awakens with a new spirit of generosity and tells his dream to Saint John, promising to give alms freely and cheerfully thereafter.

SEVEN: LECHERY

Mannyng's exposition on lechery constitutes another long section, over 1200 lines, including seven kinds of lechery: religion and lechery, women and lechery, priests and lechery, and sexual intercourse and lechery.<sup>122</sup> These five subdivisions are exemplified, respectively, by the tale of Saint Benet, the remarks of Saint Jerome, the tale of the Jew who overheard devils, the tale of the priest's concubine, the tale of Saint Justyne, and the tale of the flesh-tempted hermit.<sup>123</sup>

Saint Benet's Temptation

The tale of Saint Benet's temptation follows Mannyng's exposition upon seven kinds of lechery: fornication, adultery, incest, lechery of religious folk, rape of virgins, rape of others' wives, and lying with common women. Saint Benet's temptation is fornication. He is sitting in his cell one day when a "fende of helle/Yn lykenes of a bryd" flies into the cell and, singing merrily, sits on Benet's hand. After touching Saint Benet's hand, the bird quickly flies away and is seen no more. Suddenly, Saint Benet feels a great lecherous temptation about a woman he once saw.

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<sup>122</sup>11. 7337-8582.

<sup>123</sup>11. 7477-7536, 7697-7708, 7725-7880, 7987-8082, 8159-8278, and 8441-8582 respectively.

Jesus, seeing the almost unbearable temptation, sends the Holy Ghost to help Saint Benet. Benet promptly casts off his clothes and rolls around in the thorns and nettles outside his cell until the temptation leaves. The experience so impresses Benet that he is never tempted to lechery again.

The second exposition on lechery contains several admonitions: men and women must never be alone together; religious folk are to remain pure; they must avoid lecherous thought in bed, handlyng (not defined), or dreams; the tempted and tempter are both guilty; there should be no lechery in children; and priests are not to touch or kiss women. Saint Jerome's advice applies to the second point.

#### Saint Jerome's Example

The remarks of Saint Jerome constitute advice rather than a tale. He advises men never to think on women, because thinking about women corrupts a man of holy church; furthermore, Saint Jerome does not even think about his own sister. His sister has asked him to keep her in his prayers, but he says that he can not think of her, even in his prayers. Saint Jerome implies that temptation to lechery is found even in prayerful thought.

#### The Eavesdropping Jew

The tale of the Jew who overheard devils applies to Mannyng's admonition to priests to refrain from touching a woman. An itinerant Jew decides to sleep in an old temple

of Apollo. Though not a Christian, he thinks about Christ and His passion and makes a cross all around himself. At midnight, he is awakened by the great noise of Satan and subordinate devils who have come to report their evil deeds. One after another, the devils report their deeds of generating evil. Finally, one devil reports that after forty winters he got a bishop to pat a nun on the back. Satan gives this devil great praise and seats the devil beside himself; then, he notices the Jew lying closely by. The subordinate devils go to the place where the Jew lies, but they can not touch him because the cross is there. The fiends and Satan leave the temple sorrowfully. The Jew, having witnessed this spectacle, gives his life to Christ.

### The Priest's Concubine

The tale of the Priest's concubine is directed to women who sin with priests. A lecherous priest keeps a concubine and has four children by her. Years pass, and the priest dies. Three boys in their adulthood become priests; the other becomes a scholar. The concubine-mother refuses to repent, because she has three priests to pray her into heaven. She dies soon after she declares that she will not repent, and her sons place her body on a bier in the house. During the next three nights, fiends attempt unsuccessfully to take the corpse; on the third night, many fiends come and carry off both the corpse and the bier.

### Saint Justyne

Mannyng's denunciation of lechery by witchcraft is exemplified by this tale. A fair Christian named Justyne goes to school, where a master, Agladyus, sees her and lusts for her. Agladyus then goes to Cypryne, a dealer in black magic, to have him charm Justyne into wanting Agladyus. Cypryne goes right to work and conjures some fiends who come to Justyne three times in the form of her parents to persuade her to go to Agladyus' bed. Each time, the bewildered Justyne blesses her cross and drives off the disguised and disgusted fiends. When the fiends return to Cypryne, they confess that they have no power over Christ and a Christian virgin. Cypryne, touched by the fiends' testimony, forsakes necromancy, gives his life to Christ, and eventually becomes a bishop. Both Cypryne and Justyne later die as martyrs and go to heaven.

### The Tempted Hermit

The lesson in this tale is that fleshly lust can be conquered. A hermit who falls into great temptation seeks advice and comfort from an old man, but the old man severely berates him for fleshly weakness. The dejected hermit goes on down the road; soon, he meets an abbot named Apollo, who perceives that the hermit is troubled, so he speaks to him. Apollo encourages the hermit to go back to his cell and fight temptation; then, he seeks the old man who talked so

cruelly to the hermit and prays that the old man fall into temptation. Suddenly, a black man stands in a field and shoots arrows of temptation into the old man, who instantly realizes the burning desire of temptation. The old man has learned his lesson.

At the conclusion of the first two sections of Handlyng Synne, one notices a pattern emerging. The elements of the supernatural are frequently incorporated into most of the tales, although some stories are free from miracles and ghosts. Mannyng's lessons may be evaluated by a modern educator as being in agreement with the idea that a lesson is more caught than taught so that the tales serve their purposes more as examples of vicarious experience than as dull preaching. One also notes that the number of tales per point is a measurement of importance which Mannyng uses. This pattern of the tales and their elements is consistent throughout the next section, sacrilege, and the remaining portion of Handlyng Synne.

## Chapter IV

### EXEMPLA IN THE SIN OF SACRILEGE

Mannyng's definition of sacrilege is "misdeed to holiness."<sup>124</sup> Sacrilege includes such sins as stealing from the church, striking clergy, defiling the churchyard, burying bad folk in a church, withholding church property, women's tempting of clergy, having sexual intercourse in holy places, playing in churchyards, and using the church for unholy purposes. Mannyng's humorous touch is found in this section on sacrilege, although supernatural manifestations caused by devils, God's will, or answered prayer are still plentiful. For the sin of sacrilege, Mannyng uses seven exempla: the tale of the Norfolk bondman, Valentine, Saint John Chrysostom's deacon, the sacrilegious husband and wife, the sacrilegious carolers, the chattering women, and the Bible story of Belshazzar's feast.<sup>125</sup>

#### The Norfolk Bondman

Mannyng's object in this tale is to discourage the defiling of a church cemetery. A wandering knight stops

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<sup>124</sup>1. 8597. The section on sacrilege is from 11. 8593-9492.

<sup>125</sup>11. 8669-8710, 8743-8774, 8819-8880, 8937-8986, 8987-9260, 9261-9306, and 9347-9446 respectively.



by the crumbled wall of a churchyard and lets his "bestys" feed on the cemetery grass. A bondman sees the beasts feeding and reproaches the knight for defiling the churchyard, but the knight indignantly answers that no one will worship the bodies of these churls. The bondman replies that the Lord made both earls and churls from the same earth and that no one can discern differences between the two kinds of bones. The knight concedes that the churchyard should not be defiled and promises that he will not do so again.

### Valentine

The tale of Valentine exemplifies Mannyng's admonition not to bury bad folk in a churchyard. A rich man named Valentine dies and is buried in the church cemetery. The first night following Valentine's burial, a cry comes from the churchyard, awakening the wardens. When they get to the cemetery, they see fiends dragging the bound body of Valentine out of the churchyard. The wardens retreat until morning; then, they search for Valentine's body, which they finally find outside the churchyard. It is a sad ending for Valentine, who was once a "playtour" for the church at Myleyne.

### Saint John Chrysostom's Deacon

The purpose of this tale is to show that women can be

objects of temptation in church, so they should not stand close to the clergy. Saint John Chrysostom and his deacon are devout servants of God, so much so that every time Saint John sings the mass, the Holy Spirit descends from above the altar in the likeness of a dove, "so whyte and so blesful, and so clere." The devil, furious with envy, decides to disrupt the next mass by appearing as an attractive woman. The deception works; the deacon is filled with temptation during the performance of the mass, so the Holy Spirit does not come. Saint John has the deacon shriven, though, and the fiend flees; the Holy Ghost returns.

The Sacrilegious Husband  
and Wife

Mannyng uses a humorous situation in this tale to point to a serious message: have no sexual intercourse in holy places. A man named Rychere, pursued by some enemies, takes refuge in an abbey. Later, he manages to have his wife and child and belongings brought to him. One night, he has intercourse with his wife there in the abbey, and God, seeing the defilement of the abbey, causes them to stick together. Rychere, now filled with shame, calls for monks to pray for them to be separated. The monks pray, and after the passing of some time, God separates the couple.

The Sacrilegious Carolers  
(The Dancers of  
Colbek)

The tale of the carolers follows Mannyng's admonition to refrain from carols, wrestling, or summer games in churchyards. Mannyng introduces the tale by localizing it, placing the setting in England during the reign of King Edward.<sup>126</sup> On a Christmas night in the town of Colbek, twelve youths are dancing "a karolle."<sup>127</sup> The local priest's daughter accepts an invitation from the carolers and joins them in their dancing. Robert, the priest, is about to begin mass, but the noise from the carolers prevents him from beginning. The priest admonishes the carolers to stop their dancing, but they do not. Angered, the priest prays for a curse from God to befall the dancers. The dancers' hands are fused instantaneously, and the group dancing becomes involuntary for a year. Priest Robert sends his son after his daughter Ave, who is part of the circle of dancers. Azone, the son, grasps his sister's arm, but it breaks off without bleeding, as a twig would snap from a branch. The priest has brought his own curse upon himself. He tries to bury the arm, but the arm keeps reappearing on the ground. After the third futile burial, Robert puts the arm in the church for all to see. A year passes, during which time the group is impervious to weather and the natural aging process; on the next Christmas night they separate and hasten to the church,

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<sup>126</sup>11. 9012-9013.

<sup>127</sup>1. 9016.

falling to the pavement and lying inanimate for three days. At the end of the three days, all the carolers except Ave, who is now dead, arise and address the priest about the curse that affects them and him forever; then, they leave and roam about the countryside severally ever after, even as far as Rome, hopping singly about, impervious to weather and time. The story of the dancers of Colbek spread, as did the fear of defiling a churchyard.

### Chattering Women

The exemplum of the chattering women, which immediately follows the tale of the sacrilegious dancers of Colbek, is a warning to those who talk during church services. During a mass, one deacon breaks into laughter, much to the chagrin of the priest. After the service, the deacon explains that he saw a fiend transcribing the chatter of two women. The fiend used the entire parchment, and when he attempted to leave with it, he struggled and rent the parchment asunder. The sight of the saddened fiend's plight caused the deacon to laugh heartily.

### Belshazzar's Feast

This last exemplum in the category of sacrilege concerns the stealing of holy church property and using it for unholy occasions. During a certain feast held by the idol-worshipping King Belshazzar, a disembodied hand wrote a message on the wall: "Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin." The

trembling Belshazzar sent for his astrologers, but they could not interpret the message. At the queen's suggestion, Belshazzar called in the prophet, Daniel, who correctly interpreted the words from God, saying that the king would be killed and that the kingdom would fall on that very night.<sup>128</sup> Before the night passed, the king was killed and his empire taken.<sup>129</sup>

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<sup>128</sup>Daniel was seventy years old when the fall of Babylon occurred. Cf. Halley, op. cit., p. 344.

<sup>129</sup>Loc. cit. The account of Belshazzar is found in Daniel 5. Archeologists have verified the existence of Belshazzar, the wall, and the nature of his loss of the kingdom to the Persians.

## Chapter V

### EXEMPLA IN THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS OF HOLY CHURCH

The Seven Sacraments are Baptism, Confirmation, Altar, Penance, Holy Orders, Matrimony, and Extreme Unction.<sup>129</sup> Mannyng devotes about 2,000 lines to the sacraments, choosing to illustrate only Baptism, the Altar, and Holy Orders. He must have thought these three sacraments to be of prime importance, for he includes two exempla with Baptism, six with the Altar, and two with Holy Orders.

#### BAPTISM

Mannyng divides Baptism into subtopics which can be briefly summarized as follows: baptism is required for salvation; unbaptized Jews are unsaved; stillborn children do not go to heaven; midwives need priestly instruction in baptism; food for children must be given in the name of God only; children are christened only once; and godchildren should not be victims of godparents' lechery. Mannyng uses exempla that stress the need for midwife instruction and caution against lechery with godchildren.

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<sup>129</sup>11. 9493-9786, 9787-9890, 9891-10810, 10811-10942, 10943-11154, 11155-11230, and 11231-11302 respectively.

The Midwife

A midwife becomes panic stricken when the newborn baby shows symptoms of dying, and in her unnerved state, she cries, "God and seynt Ione/Crysten þe chylde, boþe flesshe and bone," and does nothing else.<sup>130</sup> What she should have said, according to Mannyng's instructions in the portion preceding the tale, was, "y crysten þe yn þe name of þe fadyr & sone & holy gast;" then, she should have given the baby a name and cast it upon the water.<sup>131</sup> A priest arrives and asks the midwife how she christened the child. When she tells him, the priest laments her action, because the child may not go to heaven.

The Lecherous Godfather

Easter time comes, and a godfather has a lecherous desire for his goddaughter, who is now a young woman.<sup>132</sup> Her unsuspecting parents let her stay with him over the Easter holiday. The godfather has intercourse with her, but by morning he is overcome with guilt. He finally decides that he should go to church, even though he expects some sign of God's vengeance. After he has been in church for a while with no evils to befall him, he decides that

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<sup>130</sup>11. 9627-9628. The tale is from 11. 9619-9648.

<sup>131</sup>11. 9602-9604.

<sup>132</sup>11. 9719-9786.

God has forgotten his sin. God, knowing his decision, strikes him dead seven days later. After the godfather is buried, a fire emanates from within the grave and burns his body, the stone, and the earth around him to the ground.

#### THE ALTAR (HOLY COMMUNION)

Of the sacraments, Mannyng gives the most attention to the sacrament of the Altar.<sup>133</sup> In this exposition, he defines the purpose of Holy Communion, the properties of the sacramental bread, and the purpose of the mass. He uses six exempla to show the miraculous power of prayer and the singing of the mass: the tale of the priest who witnessed the sacramental bread and wine transformed into a child's flesh and blood, the tale of the priest who saw people's sins in their faces, the tale of the priest who was served by a dead lord, the tale of the Suffolk man who was sung out of purgatory, Bede's tale of Jumna and Tumna, and the tale of the trapped miner who was sustained by his wife's offerings.<sup>134</sup>

#### The Doubting Priest

A man of great religion does not believe in the sacrament; he tells two abbots of his disbeliefs, saying that he

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<sup>133</sup>11. 9891-10810.

<sup>134</sup>11. 9999-10074, 10159-10248, 10320-10396, 10397-10518, 10519-10704, and 10729-10790 respectively.



will require proof before he will believe. The two abbots pray for seven nights for a sign from God. On the seventh day, the abbots lay the "vble" on the altar, and immediately after the blessing on it, the "vble" changes into the form of a child of flesh and blood. An angel descends from heaven and sacrifices the child, and the child's blood runs into the chalice. The priest begins to cry for mercy from God's Son of heaven. Having witnessed this miracle, the priest leads a good life as a believer for the rest of his days.

#### The Priest Who Saw Sin

The exposition preceding this tale enumerates seven qualities of sacramental bread and emphasizes that people must be pure when they partake of Holy Communion. The lesson of the tale is that people can not hide their sins. A priest of great discretion prays one Easter to know who partakes of the sacrament worthily and who partakes unworthily. God grants the request, and the priest is enabled to see the cleanliness and the various kinds of sins in the faces of his parishioners as they receive the sacrament. After the service, God explains the countenances of the parishioners to the horrified priest. Those who appear as bright as the sun are clean of sin; those who are black are lecherous; those who are red are angry and wicked; those who possess swollen visages are envious; and those who bite

at their fingers are backbiters. God explains a few more types; then, He explains that unworthy partakers are asking for hard Judgment.

### The Priest and the Dead Lord

The lesson in this and the next two tales is that great power exists in the singing of the mass, which can sustain life or enable a soul to enter the bliss of heaven. One priest, Felix, finds himself being served by a certain man during his bath time. One day, the priest, having decided that this good servant deserves a treat, brings two loaves for the servant, who then divulges that he is dead and can not eat mortal food any more; then, he explains that he, a former lord, is being punished in purgatory but that the priest can enable him to go to heaven by singing six masses. The priest is happy to sing the masses, and after the sixth mass, the servant-lord is seen no more. The singing of the mass has enabled him to be admitted to heaven.

### The Suffolk Man

A Suffolk man who dies is allowed to return to his wife to ask that a mass be sung so that he might go to heaven. The wife gets a friar to consent to sing the mass, but when she retires that night, her husband comes to her again, saying that the mass sung by the friar was in vain; a priest of clean life has to sing the mass. The wife seeks out a

friar of holy life and has him sing the mass. That evening the husband returns once more, this time to thank her and the friar of clean life for the mass which enables him to go to heaven.

### Jumna and Tumna

Jumna, a knight, and Tumna, a priest, are brothers. During a war Jumna is severely injured and taken captive by the enemy, but he does not divulge the fact that he is a knight. He is bound with fetters every night; in the mornings, though, guards find him with the fetters off. The reason is that Jumna's brother, Tumna, has come from Northumberland to Trent to claim Jumna's body. Jumna was reported slain, so Tumna claims the wrong body, buries it in his church, and prays for it. Unknown to Tumna, his prayers have been unlocking Jumna's fetters every day. The Frisian required a ransom from King Loyre of Kaunterbyre to release Jumna; it is granted and delivered, and Jumna goes home and seeks Tumna to tell him of the miracle of the bonds' breaking. Tumna is not surprised, for he knows the power of the singing of the mass.

### The Trapped Miner

Somewhere beyond the sea a miner becomes trapped by a cave-in; his fellow miners presume him dead, so they report the tragedy to his wife. The loyal wife begins offering bread and wine for his soul; she continues offerings and

almsdeeds for a year. One year later, the miners decide to re-excavate the old digging; to their surprise, they find the trapped miner alive and well. The grateful husband explains that his wife's offerings sustained his life, and the miraculous story spreads throughout the country.

### HOLY ORDERS

Mannyng expounds upon three main points in Holy Orders: the abuses in appointing bishops, the ignorance of priests, and the promotion of unqualified men.<sup>135</sup> He uses two localized exempla for Holy Orders: first, the tale of Paschasius' punishment for not agreeing to the selection of the best man for Pope; and, secondly, a tale of warning against buying bishoprics and worshiping bad bishops' bodies.<sup>136</sup> Both tales demonstrate that only qualified men belong in these important positions. The second tale is illustrative of a problem in Mannyng's day; abbacies and other positions were often obtained by forged apostolic letters instead of Papal authorization.<sup>137</sup>

#### Paschasius' Punishment

Paschasius is a holy man in the church of Rome, well

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<sup>135</sup> ll. 10943-11154.

<sup>136</sup> ll. 11007-11058 and 11079-11132 respectively.

<sup>137</sup> Alfred H. Sweet, "The Apostolic See and the Heads of English Religious Houses," Speculum, XXVIII (1953), 475.

known for his kindness and alms. At an election time, the committee is to choose either Laurence or Symakus to be the next Pope. Everyone but Paschasius votes for Symakus. Paschasius knows that Symakus is the better qualified, but he does not change his mind. During Symakus' reign, Paschasius dies, and everyone assumes that he has gone to heaven. One day, though, in a washing-place, Bishop Germyne thinks that he recognizes Paschasius serving.<sup>138</sup> Germyne addresses Paschasius, and Paschasius admits that he is having to serve in this way for not choosing the better man for Pope. Paschasius asks Germyne to pray for him; Germyne does, and Paschasius is allowed to enter heaven.

### A Tale of Warning

Monks working in the churchyard uncover the perfectly preserved body of a bishop. Thinking it to be special, they bring the body in, lay it upon a stone, and worship it, incensing the body. At night, as a sexton lies in bed, a voice tells him not to incense the body any more. The sexton disobeys the voice and gives the body more incense on the next day, so that on the following night the voice warns him, again. The sexton asks why the body should not be incensed, and the voice tells him to look for a written message the next morning. The message is there on a scroll as promised,

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<sup>138</sup>This situation is the same as the one in the tale of the priest who was waited on by a dead lord.

stating that this bishop is in hell, because he wickedly bought his bishopric; he was as bad as a thief.

## Chapter VI

### EXEMPLA IN THE TWELVE POINTS (REQUISITES) OF SHRIFT

Mannyng's tone becomes more serious in his exposition of the Twelve Points of Shrift. His discussion in the Twelve Points is short and concise, containing fewer exempla than in previous sections and refraining from straying into areas that can be considered tangent topics. Mannyng uses only five exempla, four of which are Biblical accounts, in his exposition of the Twelve Points: one should (1) confess with a free heart; (2) shrive hastily; (3) make full and frequent confession; (4) have meekness; (5) divulge all the details of one's sins; (6) be sorry for one's sins; (7) confess to a wise man; (8) confess one's own sins, not another's; (9) confess not false sins; (10) confess frankly; (11) do penance gladly, promptly, and thoroughly; and (12) make the confession complete, not in portions.<sup>139</sup> The five exempla, covering points one, four, eight, nine, and twelve, respectively, are the Biblical accounts of Achor's false

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<sup>139</sup>Including the introduction, the section on shrift is ll. 11303-11898. Point one, ll. 11351-11372; two, 11373-11400; three, 11401-11448; four, 11449-11482; five, 11483-11516; six, 11517-11574; seven, 11575-11610; eight, 11611-11696; nine, 11697-11756; ten, 11757-11776; eleven, 11777-11816; twelve, 11817-11898.

confession, of Christ and the Leper, of the Pharisee and the Publican, and of Ananias and Sapphira, as well as the tale of a woman's unconfessed sin that flew out of her mouth.<sup>140</sup>

### Achor (Achan)

The Biblical accounts of Achor's confession and of Christ and the leper are little more than references of eight lines each, but there is sufficient narrative element in each to qualify the two as exempla. As to the account of Achor, Furnivall labels the story, "The Bible-Story of Achor's false Confession," but the title can be slightly misleading. Mannyng's allusion to Achor (actually Achan) is for the purpose of illustrating that a person should confess with a free heart.<sup>141</sup> Perhaps, the proper interpretation of Furnivall's title is "how Achor confessed to being false (i.e., disobedient) to God." Achor confessed his sin while knowing that he would have to be killed, but he knew that God would punish the Israelites collectively if he did not confess.

For purposes of clarification of the point he was trying to establish, Mannyng probably should have recounted the story. Perhaps Mannyng thought that the story was known

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<sup>140</sup>11. 11365-11372, 11457-11464, 11645-11674, 11703-11746, 11845-11876.

<sup>141</sup>Furnivall, op. cit., p. 352.



sufficiently well to omit Achor's fate; possibly he did not want to mention that Achor had to give his life in spite of his "free heart" confession. In Mannyng's account of Achor, no consequences of his confession are mentioned; only the fact that Achor confessed that he had stolen a mantle of scarlet, a roll of gold, and some silver. Mannyng did not recount the story, but Manuel des Pechiez contains the entire account.

The story of Achor (Achan) comprises the entire seventh chapter of Joshua. In Chapter Six, the walls of Jericho had just fallen, and the Israelites were warned by God through Joshua not to take any of the spoils lest the Israelites be cursed.<sup>142</sup> Achan, of the tribe of Judah, confessed that he stole a Babylonian robe, \$200 in silver, and a \$500 bar of gold. As punishment for Achan's sin, Joshua and all of the other Israelites took Achan, the silver, and robe, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and everything else he owned, and brought them to the valley of Achor (the name Mannyng gave to Achan); then, the men of Israel stoned them all, burned their bodies, and heaped stones upon them. The valley was called "The valley of Achor" or "The valley of Calamity" from then on. Mannyng apparently considered the retelling of this dramatic incident and Achor's self-sacrifice unnecessary, but he used

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<sup>142</sup>Joshua 6: 18.

no other exempla to reinforce the idea of confessing with a free heart.

### Christ and the Leper

In the story of Christ and the leper, all that is mentioned is that the leper was meek, so Christ healed him. Mannyng gives just enough information to acquaint the listener with the characters. The lesson is the important element, though, and there is one in the example of the leper: Christ performs miracles for the faithful meek.

### The Pharisee and the Publican

This well-known Bible story is a warning to refrain from confessing someone else's sins. The Pharisee was a religious man, in the technical sense of the term. He prayed publicly with thanks to God that he was a very good person, not like the wretched publican. The publican knew of his own sin and feared to look upward, so he beat his chest with his fists and cried, "Lorde, þou haue on me mercy!"<sup>143</sup> No immediate consequences are given, but Mannyng informs the reader that God heard the sincere prayer of the publican; as to the Pharisee, " . . . byfore God he stanke."<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup><sub>1</sub>. 11672.

<sup>144</sup><sub>1</sub>. 11673.

### Ananias and Sapphira

Mannyng uses this tale for confession of "false sins." The phrase false sins, according to the tale, can be interpreted as sins involving false statements. Ananias and Sapphira were a rich husband and wife who were going to become Christians during the early days of Christianity. As Christians, they were to sell their all and give the money to the apostles for distribution among those in need. Ananias retained part of the money, and the apostle Peter knew it. Ananias swore that he had presented his all, and Peter said, "why lvest þou on þe holy spyryt?"<sup>145</sup> Instantly Ananias fell dead. Mannyng says that Ananias turned as black as lead, but Acts 5:5 says nothing about such a transformation. Sapphira came in three hours later, not knowing what had transpired, and asserted that she had given her all. Peter rebuked her, and she instantly fell dead. God, not Peter, had struck her dead for her "false sin."

### The Woman Confessor

The only tale in the Points of Shrift is this one of a woman who comes to a friar to be shriven. As she confesses, she gains increasing comfort. Finally, she is bold enough to confess a sin long unconfessed. When she tells the friar of this secret sin, a "blak" flies out of her mouth. The

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<sup>145</sup><sub>1</sub>. 11726.

friar sees it and thanks God for His mercy. The appearance of a "fende of helle," as Mannyng labeled it, in this case was a welcome sight, because there was assurance that the "unholy spirit" left the body.

## Chapter VII

### EXEMPLA IN THE TWELVE GRACES OF SHRIFT

The final section of Handlyng Synne is comprised of Twelve Graces of Shrift. The twelve graces are actually eight graces and four admonitions. The eight graces are given the headings "þe fyrste grace . . . ," þe secunde grace . . . ," and so on through the eighth grace.<sup>146</sup> The last four headings are noun clauses that have no references to grace. The headings of the graces appear this way when assembled in list form:

þe fyrste grace þat shryfte 3yueþ.  
þe secunde grace þat shryfte 3yueþ.  
þe þred grace þat shryfte 3yueþ.  
þe fourþe grace þat shryfte 3yueþ.  
þe fyfueþ grace þat shryfte 3yueþ.  
þe syxte grace þat shryfte 3yueþ.  
þe seuenþe grace þat shryfte 3yueþ.  
þe eyghte grace þat shryfte 3yueþ.  
þat þou falle nat yn wanhope.  
þat þou excuse nat þy synne.  
þat þou make nat þy synne lytly to seme.  
þat þou make no skornyng yn shryfte.

The eight graces of shrift are these: shrift (1) gives life to the soul, (2) lightens folk of the load of their sins, (3) is anointing forevermore, (4) shends the fiend of hell, (5) wins forgiveness, (6) joys all the court of heaven,

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<sup>146</sup>11. 11899-11936, 11937-11980, 11981-12012, 12013-12054, 12055-12106, 12107-12148, 12149-12252, 12253-12410.

(7) blinds the devil, and (8) makes God love man. The last four graces admonish one (1) not to despair, (2) not to excuse one's sin, (3) not to minimize one's sin, and (4) not to sin after being shriven.<sup>147</sup> Only the seventh grace has an exemplum, the tale of the way to put the devil's eye out spiritually.<sup>148</sup> The remaining four exempla are for the first, second, and fourth admonitions. Cain and Judas exemplified despair; Adam excused his sin; and in the tale of the devil who came to be shriven, the devil wanted to continue in his sin.

### The Invisible Man

The devil cannot see a person if he is shriven; that idea is the essence of this tale. A hermit of good grace in God knows which men are in deadly sin as they go from place to place. On one particular holy day, the hermit sees a devil leading a man by a chain leash to the church gate. The fiend can not follow him into the church, and the fiend's chain breaks when the man decides to go into the church. While the man is inside the church, the fiend waits for his reappearance so that he can rechain the man. What the fiend does not know is that the man has been shriven for

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<sup>147</sup> 11. 12289-12338, 12339-12410, 12411-12480, 12481-12630.

<sup>148</sup> 11. 12163-12250.

his sin, so when the man comes out of the church, he is invisible to the fiend, who is very much disturbed. The fiend waits until everyone is gone, but he never sees his former captive. The holy hermit commands the fiend to explain his presence at the church gate, and the fiend explains that he can not find a certain man to reclaim him upon his departure from the church. The hermit, overjoyed, runs to overtake the shrunken man down the road and ask him to tell about his life. The man tells how he felt charged with sin before confession and relieved of the burden afterward. The hermit understands that sin is a kind of individual prison, escape from which is available only through shrift; he then returns to the devil, who is still waiting for his captive to appear, and commands the devil to do no more evil but to return to hell and dwell in pain and misery.

### Cain and Judas

Both Cain and Judas are given as examples of men who fell into despair of God's mercy.<sup>149</sup> Mannyng alluded to Cain and Judas with one-paragraph explanations of their acts and concomitant despair. Cain, who murdered his brother Abel, felt that he was not worthy of mercy. Judas condemned himself to hang; he should have called upon God's mercy. These short exempla show that man need not and must not fall

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<sup>149</sup>11. 12307-12314 and 12315-12322 respectively.

into despair.

### Adam

The account of Adam is not designated as a tale; it is a paraphrase of the story in Genesis.<sup>150</sup> Mannyng's lesson is that Adam excused his sin of partaking of the forbidden fruit. Adam actually blamed God, saying, "'my wyfe made me bygygne;/pat yche wyfe pat pou wro3t,/She synned fyrst, and y no3t."<sup>151</sup> Adam accused God of being a tempter and a faulty Creator. Adam discovered quickly that since he was given the freedom of choice, he was accountable for the consequences.

### The Devil's Shrift

Appropriately, Mannyng chose as his last exemplum the tale of how the devil came to a holy man to be shriven.<sup>152</sup> Mannyng's final admonition, to which this tale applies, is not to ridicule shrift by continuing to sin. In this concluding tale, a "fende of helle" comes in human form to a holy man to confess his wickedness. Proudly, he confesses that he has sunk ships, burned and slaughtered towns, created wrath and evil among men, committed all the seven deadly sins with delight, and bound thousands of men in sin. The holy

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<sup>150</sup>11. 12343-12376.

<sup>151</sup>11. 12346-12348.

<sup>152</sup>11. 12501-12618.



man asks the "penitent" whether he is sorry for his sins, and the fiend answers that he would have done everything twenty times more. The holy man, then, realizes that the "man" is actually a devil and asks the devil why he has come to be shriven. The devil replies that he sees people who go to church with black souls and come out with bright, shining souls. The devil wants his own soul to be bright, too. The holy man rebukes him, saying that he can never have a bright soul without repentance for his sins. He commands the devil to go back to Satan, and the devil returns to his own place unshriven.

## Chapter VIII

### DEVICES IN HANDLYNG SYNNE

Mannyng's exempla in Handlyng Synne contain several devices that capture the reader's interest. For example, he utilizes humor, "fendes from helle," supernatural punishments, supernatural deaths, visions, voices, miracles, and dated or localized events in his tales, in addition to Biblical stories, Biblical admonitions, and secular admonitions. All these elements, individually or in combinations, are effective interest-holding devices.

#### Humor

The element of humor is to be found in the tales of the witch and her cow-sucking bag, the sacrilegious husband and wife, the sacrilegious carolers, and the devil's disappointment. In the tale of the witch, the bishop discovered that he had no faith to work the witch's charm; the sacrilegious husband and wife were stuck together by God for having sexual intercourse in the church; the sacrilegious carolers (dancers of Colbek) were condemned to hop about the countryside forever; and the little devil tore his burdensome parchment containing a transcription of two women's chatter as he tried to leave the church.

One insertion of humor which is not part of a tale

follows the exemplum of Saint Florens' bear, which exemplifies envy. Here, Mannyng quoted a comparison between the French and the English, saying "pat Frenshe men synne yn lecherye,/And Englys men yn enuye."<sup>153</sup>

### Fendes from Helle

The little devil in church is a humorous example (the only humorous one) of another element in the exempla, the "fendes from helle." The fiends are found as active characters in any of several forms in fourteen other exempla: the mother who cursed her child, the nun who spoke naughty words, the adulterous wife, the hypocritical monk, the English squire, the father who would not chastise his child, Carpus' vision, Lucretius, Saint Benet, the eavesdropping Jew, the priest's concubine, Saint Justyne, the tempted hermit, Valentine, John Chrysostom's deacon, the shriven woman, the invisible shriven man, and the devil who came to be shriven.

In the tale of the cursing mother, a devil leaped into the child and turned her into wood. Fiends exhumed the body of the nun who spoke naughty words, cut her tongue in two, and burned half her body. A fiend in the form of a dragon lay between the split skeleton of an adulterous wife. A fiend strangled the hypocritical monk to death, and in the

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<sup>153</sup>11. 4151-4152.

tale of the English squire, the squire was visited by both heavenly angels and devils and was impaled by the devils on two burning swords. The son whose father would not chastise him became deathly ill and saw two black men who took his soul from his body into hell. Fiends carried off the corpse of a priest's concubine. Fiends dragged the body of Valentine out of the churchyard. A "blak" (fiend in the form of a bat) flew out of the mouth of the shriven woman confessor. A devil kept a man bound in a chain until the man went to mass and was shriven; and the devil in the last tale came in human form to a holy man to be shriven.

In addition to controlling and executing those who rejected Christ, the devils had assignments to tempt everyone. A devil in the form of a bird tempted Saint Benet to lechery. Devils reported to Satan about their evil deeds while a Jew lay unnoticed nearby, and the devil who got a priest to pat a nun on the back after forty winters was most praised. Two fiends came to Justyne in the form of her parents in a dream to tempt her to commit fornication. A fiend in the form of a black man shot arrows of temptation into the man who berated the tempted hermit. A devil in the form of a woman tempted Saint John Chrysostom's deacon.

### Punishment

Sometimes a form of supernatural punishment awaits the unrepentant sinner. Often the punishment is death; in

other exempla, different types of punishment are administered. The following exempla have some supernatural punishment other than death itself. The knight who robbed a poor man of his cloak had to carry the same cloak, now as heavy as a mountain, after death. Saint Forsyne received a short visit to hell in order to be purified. The proud lady was burned to ashes continuously by a burning wheel in hell. The backbiting English monk had to gnaw his burning tongue continuously in hell. The sacrilegious husband and wife were stuck together. The sacrilegious carolers were condemned to hop about forevermore as punishment for playing in the churchyard. The body of the man who lay with his goddaughter was consumed by fire. Paschasius' punishment after death was to serve the living in a washing-place. The tempted monk's punishment was that a dove (the Holy Spirit) flew out of the monk's mouth when he forsook God.

### Death

Another frequent element is that of the untimely death of an individual. Typically, the person is overcome with mortal illness or is struck down suddenly. Mannyng's use of exempla with themes of death or mortal illness is an excellent means of showing parishioners that death can come to any person without regard to age, sex, or status. In these exempla, God acts from His own initiative or else answers someone's prayer. The employer in the tale of Saturday, the

half-holy day, was struck dead, as was the girl cursed by her mother. God also struck dead the rich forswearer at the trial in London. The hypocritical monk at Tangabaton Abbey was suddenly strangled to death. The clerk who donned the new coat was instantly struck down by fire. The backbiting English monk fell into mortal sickness. The four monks who had killed Saint Florens' bear died and rotted instantly.

The English squire fell into mortal sickness. The irreverent minstrel was struck down by a stone from a wall. The son of the indulgent father fell into mortal sickness. Sire Ely and his sons died by the hand of God. The unmerciful judge fell into sickness and died. God allowed the devil to leap into Lucretius and travail him with great pain for three days, after which time Lucretius died. The Cambridgeshire miser-parson was struck dead within seconds after he stuffed his mouth with gold. The two wicked Kesteven executors died at the hand of God; one was mysteriously strangled; the other died in poverty. The priest's concubine died soon after she refused to repent. Ave, the priest's daughter, died as a result of her father's curse in the tale of the sacrilegious carolers. Belshazzar was killed during the same evening that the handwriting appeared on the wall. The lecherous godfather was struck dead seven days after he decided that God had forgotten about his sin. Ananias and Sapphira were struck dead for their deceit.

Miracles, Visions,  
and Rewards

Although the message of death and punishment is frequent and strong, the positive aspects of the picture are well painted, also, with exempla which include accounts of miracles, visions, and rewards. The monk in the first tale experienced the return of the dove after he had repented. The bloody child was a vision used to lead a man to repentance. The people who kept Saturday holy in the tale of the vinestorms were spared their vines. A knight was given a vision of the Judgment. In the tale of the knight who robbed a poor man, the friend of the dead knight had a sacrament of the altar performed by a good man so that the dead man went to heaven. Saint Forsyne underwent purification in a short visit to hell. The dead proud lady came in a vision to her squire one night to show him her fate and to offer an opportunity for him and his lord to change their fates.

Similarly, the backbiting English monk offered warning and opportunity when he appeared to his live acquaintance in a vision. A crucifix kissed the merciful knight. The wine and bread were transformed into flesh and blood to convince a doubting priest of the holiness of the sacrament. Another priest was enabled to see folk's spiritual conditions in their faces. A dead lord was sung out of purgatory by a priest, and a good wife had a mass performed so that her dead

husband could go to heaven. The husband returned to have her find a priest of clean life to sing the mass, and she did.

Miracles through the power of prayer, the mass, and confession are further exemplified. Jumna's fetters were broken as a result of Tumna's prayers and the singing of the mass. The tale of the trapped miner tells of the good wife who offered bread and wine for the soul of her husband, who was trapped when a mine caved in. After her offerings and almsdeeds for one year, she learned that miners found her husband alive and well, sustained by her offerings. In the Bible, a believing leper was healed by Christ. In the tale of the woman confessor, a "blak" (fiend in the form of a bat) flew out of her mouth, and in the tale that followed, a man's shrift made him invisible to the devil.

#### Dated and Localized Events

It is probable that marvels did not fully convince everyone of the powers of prayer and the mass, so Mannyng included a more authoritative element, the localizing of some of the exempla. The Bible stories were automatically dated if not also placed, and the tales were sometimes given specific or at least general localities. The tempted monk went to Egypt. The tale of the vinestorms transpired in Venice. The tale of the cursing mother was set in the holy land. In Rome a knight had a vision of the Judgment. The tale of the adulterous wife occurred on an isle beyond the



sea. The abbot Zenon went to Palestine Abbey. The rich man committed perjury at a London trial. The hypocritical monk lived at Tangabaton Abbey in Iconium. The backbiting English monk lived in an abbey in England. The merciful knight lived beyond the sea. The procrastinating English squire lived during the reign of King Conred. Saint Robert Grostest was from Lynkolin. The unmerciful judge lived in a country beyond the sea. The miser-parson was from Cambridgeshire. The introductory remarks to the tale of the three dishonest executors indicate that the executors were from England. The two wicked executors were located in Kesteven.

Saint Justyne lived in the city of Antioch. The bondsman was from the town of Norfolk. Valentine was the playtour for the church of Myleyne. The sacrilegious carolers were cursed in Colbek. In Suffolk, a woman had her husband sung out of purgatory. The tale of Jumna and Tumna was set in the time of Bede. Jumna was wounded at Trent while Tumna was a priest in Tuncestre. Paschasius was a deacon in the church of Rome. The tale of buying bishoprics was set in Wales.

Thus, the seventy-three exempla used by Mannyng were fortified with one or more devices to capture interest or to give authenticity. Mannyng used outright humor in four exempla and one exposition as well as subtle humor in other tales. Fiends from hell appeared in eighteen exempla; supernatural punishments appeared in fourteen. Miracles or

supernatural rewards were found in twenty-one exempla, and visions or voices appeared in twelve. Including the Biblical accounts or allusions, twenty-nine exempla gave references to dates or localities. Mannyng made Handlyng Synne an invaluable tool, replete with exempla to serve as living sermons to those who read or listened.

## Chapter IX

### SOURCES OF TALES

Since Handlyng Synne is mostly an adaptation of the Manuel des Pechiez, most of the tales therein are the same as those contained in the Manuel; however, when the occasion required more appropriate material, Mannyng supplied it. From the Manuel des Pechiez, he used fifty-three exempla: the tempted monk (also the hermit and the dove), the vine-storms, the undutiful son, the cursing mother, the knight with the vision of the Judgment (also the bridge of dread), the quarrelsome nun (who spoke naughty words), the adulteress' tomb, Saint Macaire, Abbot Zenon, the ghost's cloak, Forsyne (or Fursey), treatment of usurers, the London perjurer, the death of Saint John the Baptist, Jephthah and daughter, the hypocritical monk, the proud lady, the burned clerk, the backbiting monk, the merciful knight, Saint Florens (or Florentius) and his bear, Conred's (or Coenred's) sergeant, the rude minstrel, the blaspheming boy, Carpus' vision, the unmerciful judge, Pers the usurer, Lucretius, the hermit's treasure, the rich man and Lazarus, Saint John the Almoner, Bishop Troilus, Saint Benedict's temptation, the eaves-dropping Jew, the priest's concubine, Saint Justyne, the flesh-tempted hermit, Valentine, Saint John Chrysostom's

deacon, the sacrilegious husband (Rychere) and his wife, Belshazzar's feast, the lecherous godfather (sinful curial), the incredulous man of religion, Priest Felix, the buried miner, Paschasius, Achor's (Achan's) treasure, the Pharisee and the publican, Ananias and Sapphira, the woman confessor, the man on a devil's leash, and the devil's shrift. The remaining exempla, he supplied.

According to Sullens, the tales of the witch's bag, the bloody child, and Saint Robert Grostest have no definite sources.<sup>154</sup> Mannyng used the accounts of Syre Ely, Belshazzar's feast, and the rich man and Lazarus from the Bible.<sup>155</sup> A source for the tale of the miser-parson which antedates Mannyng's version is not given by Furnivall or Sullens. Sullens' Appendix B lists a later copy of the tale, presumably from the fifteenth century.<sup>156</sup> Sullens lists no source for the tale of the two Kesteven executors, the Norfolk bondman, the midwife, the Suffolk man, or the bishop's corpse.<sup>157</sup>

Two versions of the sacrilegious carolers came from two letters "circulated as credentials by pretended survivors of

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<sup>154</sup>Sullens, op. cit., Appendix B, pp. 330, 332.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., pp. 332-333.

<sup>156</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., pp. 333-335.

deacon, the sacrilegious husband (Rychere) and his wife, Belshazzar's feast, the lecherous godfather (sinful curial), the incredulous man of religion, Priest Felix, the buried miner, Paschasius, Achor's (Achan's) treasure, the Pharisee and the publican, Ananias and Sapphira, the woman confessor, the man on a devil's leash, and the devil's shrift. The remaining exempla, he supplied.

According to Sullens, the tales of the witch's bag, the bloody child, and Saint Robert Grostest have no definite sources.<sup>154</sup> Mannyng used the accounts of Syre Ely, Belshazzar's feast, and the rich man and Lazarus from the Bible.<sup>155</sup> A source for the tale of the miser-parson which antedates Mannyng's version is not given by Furnivall or Sullens. Sullens' Appendix B lists a later copy of the tale, presumably from the fifteenth century.<sup>156</sup> Sullens lists no source for the tale of the two Kesteven executors, the Norfolk bondman, the midwife, the Suffolk man, or the bishop's corpse.<sup>157</sup>

Two versions of the sacrilegious carolers came from two letters "circulated as credentials by pretended survivors of

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<sup>154</sup>Sullens, op. cit., Appendix B, pp. 330, 332.

<sup>155</sup>Ibid., pp. 332-333.

<sup>156</sup>Loc. cit.

<sup>157</sup>Ibid., pp. 333-335.

the band."<sup>158</sup> Mannyng found the first version in the Manuel, but he used, instead, the second version (circa 1080) from the "Legend of Saint Edith of Wilton."<sup>159</sup> He ascribed authorship of the tale to a Bishop Brunyng of Saint Tolous.<sup>160</sup> Vitae Patrum provided the source for the tale of the parish priest who read faces.<sup>161</sup> Saint Bede's books provided the tale of Jumna and Tumna.<sup>162</sup>

Popularity of the tales which Mannyng used is proved by the North-English Homily Collection, which contains eighty-two manuscripts of tales having analogues in the Manuel and in Handlyng Synne: the tempted monk (or the hermit and the dove), the backbiting monk, the merciful knight, Carpus, Pers the usurer (or Pers Tollere), the hermit's treasure, the flesh-tempted hermit (or hermit in wanhope), the lecherous godfather (or sinful curial), and the man in a devil's leash.<sup>163</sup>

By writing for the "lewed", Mannyng achieved popularity with his exempla in Handlyng Synne; the main concern, though,

<sup>158</sup>Kenneth Sisam, Fourteenth Century Verse and Prose, pp. 204-205.

<sup>159</sup>Ibid., p. 205.

<sup>160</sup>ll. 9233-9234.

<sup>161</sup>Sullens, op. cit., p. 335.

<sup>162</sup>ll. 10516-10517.

<sup>163</sup>Sullens, op. cit., pp. 339-341.

is that each exemplum served the purpose of illuminating a point of doctrine by showing to the penitents people from all walks of life who had sinned to a small or great degree: e.g., priests, nuns, friars, monks, abbots, husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, children, midwives, concubines, godfathers, knights, miners, people of society, royalty, and even Jews. Using these personalities, Mannyng demonstrated the love of God, the power of God, the wrath of God, the wrath of Mary, the power of Satan, the power of the mass, the power of prayer, the power of deeds (especially almsdeeds), and the power of "gode" men. The exempla also show God's prerogative to judge sin when He chooses; some persons in the exempla were judged immediately, others in due time. That admonition of judgment was one that applied to everyone from parishioner to Pope.

Other works contain exempla; e.g., Dialogues of Saint Gregory (some of which Mannyng used), Disciplina Clericalis of Petrus Alphonsus, and Jacob's Well. "Example-books" such as Gesta Romanorum and Scala Celi were designed for the use of preachers. It was Mannyng's "common" sense that reached the lay people and, in turn, their parishioners. By using his skill of adaptation, combining the popular ingredients of poetry, humor, miracles, and ghost stories with his serious message, and by writing in the common tongue, Robert Mannyng best served his fellow religious leaders and

parishioners by demonstrating the trials and triumphs of life through the exempla he used in Handlynq Synne.



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APPENDIX

ORGANIZATION OF HANDLYNG SYNNE

GENERAL DIVISIONS

PROLOGUE

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS

THE SIN OF SACRILEGE

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS

THE TWELVE POINTS OF SHRIFT

THE TWELVE GRACES OF SHRIFT

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS  
(COMMANDMENT, TEACHING, EXEMPLUM)

Thou shalt have no god but one.

God is so merciful that He will forgive any sin.

The Tale of the Tempted Monk

Do not believe in dreams, black magic, or witchcraft;  
do not tempt a child.

The Bible Stories of Joseph and Daniel

The Tale of the Witch and Her Cow-Sucking Bag

Do not believe in the Three Sisters, the Fates.

Swear not God's name in idleness.

Do not swear oaths.

The Tale of the Bloody Child

Do not swear by the Virgin.

Thou shalt keep thine holy day.

Remember the Sabbath.

The Pope may not shift Sunday.

The English observe the custom of keeping Saturday holy.

The Tale of the Vinestorms and the Half-holy Day  
on Saturday

There should be no Sunday carols, wrestling, assemblies  
of women, frequenting of taverns, or gambling  
before noon.

Father and Mother we shall honor.

Obey your mother and father; do not curse them.

Keep them when they are old.

Do not give up your land to your children until you die.

The Tale of the Fond Father

Do not make your heir or doctor your executor.

Take a father's advice always.

Deal honestly with folk's wills.

Your heir is your worst executor.

Do not curse your children.

The Tale of the Mother Who Cursed Her Child

Children should dread parents' curses.

Curse not.

Honor your fathers.

Thou shalt no man slay.

Hurt no one in limb or livelihood.

Feed the poor.

Take no bribes.

Bear no false witness.

Cause no one to get killed.

The Tale of the Knight Who Had a Vision of the  
Judgment

Men shall be judged as they judge.

Do not turn folk from religion.

A backbiter slays himself, the listener, and the person  
about whom he is speaking.

Evil speaking is spiritual slaughter.

Saint Gregory's Tale of the Nun Who Spoke Naughty  
Words

We shall no whoredom do.

Woman is man's fellow; the two are one flesh and one will.

Trothplights are to be sanctioned by the church.

Trothplighters are not to fornicate.

Marriage of Joseph and Mary

Children should not be married.

One should not be married to relatives-in-law and God-parents.

Commit no bigamy.

Practice no witchcraft.

Trothplight is sacred.

Neither husband nor wife should commit adultery.

The Tale of the Adulterous Wife Whose Skeleton Split in Two

Not blaming an adulterer is consenting to his sin.

Married folk should not be jealous.

A good woman is man's bliss.

Good women are dear to God and man.

The Tale of Saint Macaire and the Two Good Married Women

There should be no copulation with wives during Penance and Lent or in holy places.

There should be no adulterous wives or whoredom.

No man's good shalt thou steal.

Theft is evil.

The Tale of Zenon, the Would-be Thief: How He Reformed Himself

There should be no child-stealing or church-breaking.

There is punishment for ravishing wives, rich girls,

and poor girls.

Lords should not rob their tenants.

The Tale of the Knight Who Robbed a Poor Man

There should be no theft by servants.

Rent-raisers are thieves.

Shriking work is theft.

Using pledged good is theft and usury, too.

Usurers are thieves.

Found goods are to be reported.

Keeping back wages and land-filching are theft.

Usurers are Lucifer's peers.

The Tale of Saint Forsyne's Visit to Hell and His  
Punishment There

Thou shalt no false witness bear.

Do not believe in witches.

Do not lie to trick, amuse, or flatter folk.

Do not lie to get goods.

Never bear false witness by your oath.

The Tale of the Rich Forswearer at a Trial in  
London

Do not swear oaths to bring mischance on wife or child,  
or take in others.

Do not set perjurers to take oaths.

Do not keep foolish or wicked oaths.

The Bible Story of the Death of Saint John the  
Baptist

The Gest of Syre Jepte (The Tale of Jephthah and  
His Daughter)



Covet not thy neighbor's thing.

Covet not thy neighbor's wife.

Husbands have both wives and lovers.

Wives have both husbands and lovers.

Do not kiss other men's wives or entice them to sin.

THE SEVEN DEADLY SINS  
(SIN, TEACHING, EXEMPLUM)

Pride is the first deadly sin.

The symptoms of pride are unbuxomness (disobedience), use of foul words, not bowing to thy sovereign, being praised for thy holy life, pride of high birth, pride of high lineage, use of bad words and deeds, pride of personal beauty, pride of strength, pride of wealth, pride of singing voice, pride of eloquence, bearing yourself highly, cunning, pride in scholarship, temptation to be idle, pride in being in favor with the king, pride in being in favor with those in high office, pride of wit, pride of possessions, arrogance, envy, pride of heart and felony, scorn, claiming work not done by you.

The Tale of the Hypocritical Monk of the Abbey  
Tangabaton

Have no pride in hair, chaplet, bearded bucks, and women's face powder.

Ladies should not be proud.

The Tale of the Proud Lady Who Was Burned to Ashes  
Again and Again in Hell by a Burning Wheel

Never despise cripples.

Have no pride in dress.

Wives are not to entice men.

The Tale of the Knight and Monk Who Loved New  
Fashions

The devil is the Chief Justice of new fashions.  
 Have no pride in being called Lord or Lady.  
 Do not be proud in halls.  
 Pride can be in women's long trains and saffron'd  
 wimples.  
 Do not borrow clothes to dance in.  
 Do not interrupt prayers and scorn God.  
 Do not exhibit false politeness.  
 Do not chide servants.  
 Do not be a backbiter.

The Tale of a Backbiting English Monk: How He Had  
 to Gnaw His Burning Tongue in Hell

Saint John denounces backbiters.  
 Do not advise wicked acts or betray secrets.  
 Priests are to keep secret the sins confessed to them.  
 Use no foul words or threats.  
 Be shriven for sins of pride.

Anger is the second deadly sin.

The characteristics of anger are wickedness, hate, and  
 murder.  
 Evil anger and righteous wrath against sin are  
 different.

The Tale of the Merciful Knight and How the  
 Crucifix Kissed Him

Envy is the third deadly sin.

The characteristics of envy are envy of others' well-  
 doing, hindering the learning of others, and envy  
 of praise of others.

The Tale of Saint Florens' Bear, Which Kept the  
 Hermit's Sheep, and How It Was Slain by

Envious Monks

Envy is a cursed sin.

Lucifer first had envy.

Englishmen sin in envy.

The backbiter is like an adder.

Traitors like Judas Iscariot dwell with Lucifer.

Traitors, backbiters, and liars are hated by God.

Sloth is the fourth deadly sin.

Rich men are blamed for making excuses for not going to church on Sunday.

Rich men are blamed for inattention at mass and for playing games on Sunday.

Rich men who are slothful in God's service shall suffer for their sloth at Doomsday.

The Tale of the English Squire Who Put off His Repentance until too Late

Slothfulness is due to the devil's suggestion.

God's service is put off for affairs with concubines.

God's service is neglected for talk.

Tournaments involve all the Seven Deadly Sins.

No miracle plays are allowed except those of Christ's birth and resurrection.

Jousts, squires' games, dances, carols, summer games, and minstrels are denounced.

The Tale of the Minstrel Who Was Killed for Disturbing a Bishop

A Tale of Bishop Saint Robert Grostest of Lincoln, and Why He Loved Music

In purgatory you shall pay for sloth in shriving here.  
Do not put it off too long.

The parson who does not rebuke his slothful flock shall pay for it at Doomsday.

Parents must chastise naughty children.

The Tale of a Father Who Would not Chastise His Child

Rich men have shrews for sons.

Fathers excuse their sons' faults.

The Tale of Sire Ely and His Wicked Sons

Young men should not be idle.

Work for the soul as well as for the body.

Men should be grateful for sound limbs.

Some men are unkindier than dogs.

Others love cattle more than Christians.

Serve God with cheerfulness to the end of your life.

Be not too fearful or too confident.

Never despair; despair leads to self-slaughter.

God is always merciful.

Think of how Christ forgave the thief on the cross.

The Tale of the Priest Carpus' Vision, and How Merciful God Is

Covetousness is the fifth deadly sin.

There is a distinction between covetousness and avarice.

Do not keep others' goods.

Do not plunder religious folk or keep back corn (for mice) that the poor need.

Wicked lawyers and false accounters shall go to hell.

Unmerciful stewards are denounced.

The Tale of the Unmerciful Judge

Simony is a part of covetousness. (Simony is the practice of selling sacred objects for a profit.)

Usurers and money-lenders are as wicked as Saracens and are not Christians.

The Tale of Pers the Usurer

Covetousness includes merchants' frauds, buying stolen objects, and making men drunk to cheat them.

Rich men try to rob poor men of their land.

The Tale of Lucretius, and How the Devil Leaped into Him

The rich are to beware, for death is at hand.

Misers are warned.

A man may save money for his wife and his children.

Misers have three sorrows: the travail in the winning, the dread to keep their winnings, and the fear of being separated from their winnings.

The Tale of the Good Hermit Who Gave Away the Money He Had Saved

Silver is a god of idolatry.

Men would rather eat their money than leave it behind.

The Tale of the Cambridgeshire Miser-Parson

Misers benefit executors.

Executors are not to keep what is not theirs.

Children are the worst executors.

Beware of London father-killers and adultresses.

Be your own executor.

The Tale of the Three Dishonest Executors Who Kept a Third of the Property

The Tale of the Two Wicked Kesteven Executors

False executors end badly; good ones go to heaven.

Testators are blamed.

An executor reproves a testator for not giving his own money away.

Gluttony is the sixth deadly sin.

Moderation is the greatest wisdom.

Never associate, eat, or drink with excommunicated folk.

Do not eat with Jews; they are Jesus' foes.

Do not try to make men drunk.

Rich men, think on Dives and Lazarus.

The Bible Story of Dives and LazarusThe Tale of Saint John the Almoner and of His Great Liberality and Courtesy

Do not chide the poor.

Give alms quickly.

Do not keep the poor standing in the cold.

The Tale of Bishop Troilus, Who Grudged His Thirty Pounds Being Given Away as Alms

Lords, give alms freely; you give them to God.

Alms win you two loves, the world's and God's.

Hear Saint Paul's high praises of charity (from I Corinthians 13:4-7).

If we have charity, we shall give to the poor.

Eat and drink with moderation.

Eat only twice a day; children may eat three times.

Rich men scold their cooks unfairly.

Late suppers by masters and men are conducive to evil.

People should not feast late on Thursday nights or have early dinners on Sundays.

Eat nothing before Mass.

The devil derives pleasure at ordered folk's sin.

Flee temptation, as Saint Jerome did.

Lechery in priest's wives is denounced.

Women who sin with priests are denounced.

The Tale of the Priest's Concubine, and How Fiends Carried off Her Dead Body

Women, beware! Priests know good and evil.

Lecherous priests will be punished.

Lecherous looks are denounced.

Lechery by witchcraft is denounced.

The Tale of Saint Justyne, and How the Sign of the Cross Protected Her from Devils

Lecherous talk is denounced.

Old boasting lechers are denounced.

Gifts for lechery are denounced.

Preventing pregnancy is denounced.

Forcing women into lechery is denounced.

Secret trothplights and lovemaking are denounced.

Trothplighted folk are cursed if they marry others.

Trothplights for lust only are denounced.

Fleshly lust can be conquered.

The Tale of the Tempted Hermit

Lechery is the seventh deadly sin.

There are seven kinds of lechery: fornication, adultery, incest, lechery of religious folk, rape of virgins, rape of others' wives, and lying with common women.

The Tale of Saint Benet's Temptation and How He Freed Himself by Rolling in Thorns and Nettles

A man should never be alone with a woman.

Folk of religion are to be pure.

No lecherous thoughts should be in bed, handling, or dreams.

Temptation to lechery can be by sight, dreams, thoughts, and fine dresses.

Tempted and tempter alike are guilty.

Forwarders of lechery are denounced.

Lechery in children is denounced.

Never kiss a woman.

Priests are not to kiss or touch a woman.

Remarks of Saint Jerome (not a tale)

The Eavesdropping Jew

THE SIN OF SACRILEGE:  
MISDEED TO HOLINESS  
(TEACHING, EXEMPLUM)

Stealing from the church is sacrilege.

Robert Mannyng apologizes for his bad verse (l. 8625, "For foule englyssh, and feble ryme").

Striking clergy is sacrilege.

The churchyard is our long house; do not defile it.

The Tale of the Norfolk Bondman

We have many lords but few gentle men.



Do not bury bad folk in a church.

The Tale of Valentine: How Devils Pulled His Body out of Its Grave in the Church

Pompous tombs constitute sacrilege.

Withholding church property is sacrilege.

Women are not to stand in the church with the clergy.

The Tale of the Temptation of Saint John Chrysostom's Deacon

A woman's kerchief is the devil's sail.

Many women are fiends.

Clerics are not to stare at women.

Keep churches holy.

Do not have sexual intercourse with women in holy places.

The Tale of the Sacrilegious Husband and Wife Who Stuck Together

Do not have carols, wrestlings, or summer games in churchyards.

The Tale of the Sacrilegious Carolers (or The Dancers of Colbek)

The Tale of the Devil's Disappointment with the Chattering Women

Pay your tithes and get four rewards: long life, salvation, forgiveness of sin, and grace.

Do not use a church for unholy purposes.

The Bible Account of Belshazzar's Feast and the Prophet Daniel

Land bought with ill-gotten money goes with the third heir.

Sacrilege is deadly sin.

THE SEVEN SACRAMENTS  
(SACRAMENT, TEACHING, EXEMPLUM)

Baptism is the first sacrament.

Baptism is necessary to salvation.

Jews who die unbaptized go to hell.

Stillborn children cannot go to heaven.

Guide children.

All should know how to baptize a child in case there is a need.

Midwives should be instructed by priests in baptism.

The Tale of the Midwife Who Christened a Child Wrongly (from Saint Gregory's Dialogues)

Do not feed a child in the name of another god.

Do not christen a child twice.

Teach children.

Do no lechery with godchildren.

The Tale of the Bad Man Who Lay with His God-daughter and Was Killed for It

Confirmation is the second sacrament.

Confirmation secures our baptismal rights.

Confirmation is strengthening against the fiend's temptation.

Beware of presenting a child's friend or a girl to the bishop.

The Altar (Holy Communion) is the third sacrament.

God's Son died to win us bliss.

We must forsake sin and believe that consecrated bread is God's flesh.

Though you taste only bread and wine, believe that they are flesh and blood.

The Tale of the Priest for Whom the Sacramental Bread and Wine Were Turned into a Child's Flesh and Blood

Sacramental bread has seven properties.

It is little, so we should be "little" or meek, not proud.

It is made of wheat, the loveliest corn, so that we shall be meek and lovely.

The "soure dogh" is a token that envy is a wicked thing.

A virtue in the wheat is that it is against slothfulness.

A virtue in the wheat is that it is against wrath.

The bread is against the sin of gluttony.

The whiteness of the bread shows that we should have no fleshly desires, which would turn us black.

No one should partake of Communion while he is in deadly sin; if a priest sings a mass while in deadly sin, he is guilty "an hunder folde."

The Tale of the Priest Who Was Enabled to See Folk's Sins in Their Faces

Do not refuse Christ.

Receive the sacrament once per year.

Priests must sing mass.

The Tale of the Priest Who Was Waited on by a Dead Lord Whom He Afterwards Sang out of Purgatory

The Tale of the Suffolk Man Who Was Taken out of Purgatory by Two Masses His Wife Got Sung for Him

Bede's Tale of Junna and Tunna (how an abbot's mass-singing made the fetters fall off a knight in prison)

Mass can bring a soul out of purgatory.

Mass can also help the living.

Mass and devout offerings help us.

The Tale of the Miner (how his wife's offerings for his soul fed him while he was buried alive in a mine)

Almsdeed will feed a man.

Make offerings yourself, because women of the character illustrated in the preceding exemplum are not to be found now.

Penance is the fourth sacrament.

Recollect all your sins and confess them with sorrow, or they will not be forgiven.

Penance is no good while sin continues.

Priests are not to curse their parishioners.

Priests should treat their folk as good shepherds do their sheep.

Holy Orders is the fifth sacrament.

Sometimes there are abuses in appointing bishops.

Sometimes priests are ignorant.

Sometimes bad men are promoted while good men are not.

The Tale of Paschasius' Punishment (for not agreeing to the selection of the best man for Pope)

A Tale of Warning (against buying bishoprics and worshiping bad bishops' bodies)

Marriage is the sixth sacrament.

Do not wed by force or wrong.

Do not disturb folk illegally married.

Do not marry children for money.

Do not break trothplights.

Extreme Unction is the seventh sacrament.

Take extreme unction at your life's end.

Ask in good time for extreme unction.

TWELVE POINTS OF SHRIFT  
(POINT, EXEMPLUM)

Confess with a free heart.

The Bible Story of Achor's False Confession

Shrive hastily; until you confess, you lose heavenly bliss.

Your confession must be full and frequent; hidden sins shall be revealed at Doomsday.

Have meekness.

Christ and the Leper

Tell all the details of your sin.

Be sorry for your sin.

Confess to a wise man.

Confess your own sins, not another's.

The Pharisee and the Publican

Do not confess false sins.

Ananias and Sapphira

Confess frankly.

Do penance gladly, promptly, and thoroughly.

Make your confession complete, not in bits.

The Tale of How Shrift Made a Woman's Unconfessed Sin  
Fly out of Her Mouth as a "Blak" (bat), a "Fende  
of Helle"

TWELVE GRACES OF SHRIFT  
(GRACE, EXEMPLUM)

Shrift gives life to the soul.

Some souls are dead in sin.

Grace comes through sorrow.

Shrift lightens folk of the load of their sins.

Shrift is anointing forevermore.

Shrift shends the fiend of hell.

Shrift wins us forgiveness.

Shrift joys all the court of heaven.

Shrift blinds the devil.

A Tale of How to Put the Devil's Eye out Spiritually  
(how by shrift a man made himself invisible to  
the fiend who before used to lead him about  
chained)

Shrift makes Christ love us.

Do not despair of God's mercy.

Cain

Judas

Do not excuse your sin.

Adam

Do not pretend that your sin is small.

Do not ridicule shrift by continuing to sin.

A Tale of How the Devil Came to Be Shriven